

ONE WOMAN'S FATE
· AND · OTHER · STORIES ·

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ONE WOMAN'S FATE

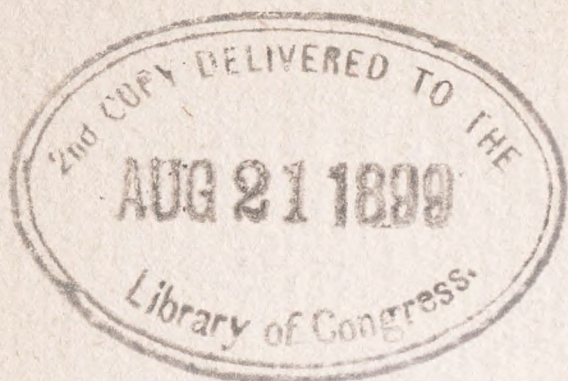
AND OTHER STORIES.

BY
MARION WEIR.



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PUBLISHER,
LONDON. NEW YORK. CHICAGO.

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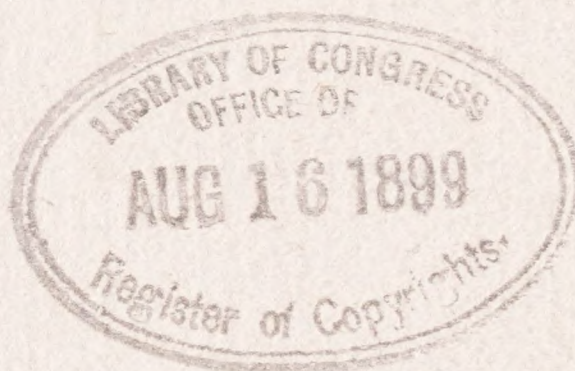
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49382
July 31, 1899

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ONE WOMAN'S FATE

AND OTHER STORIES.

ONE WOMAN'S FATE.

A STORY OF NEW YORK SOCIAL LIFE.

I.

"3 Fifth Avenue,

"New York, November 10, 189—.

"MY DEAR DARLING MAMMA:

"At last I am here. Thank you, thank you, thank you for letting me come.

"New York is the noisiest, queerest, slushiest, dearest place in this world.

"Our train got in about eight last evening, and we steamed into a huge arched place which Mr. Jerome told me afterward was some kind of a Central Depot, great, I think he said.

"Oh! I forgot. You don't know who Mr. Jerome is, do you? Well, he's a cousin of Nina's, and he seems to spend a good deal of his time here. He's tall and almost fair—you know I detest very blonde men—and his eyes are—but, come to think of it, I don't believe I know what color they are—yet. Anyway, he's nice, and he sings; but goodness! I haven't told you a single, solitary thing about New York. If only you were here, it would be too

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heavenly; you must come some time. When I'm married, perhaps. Of course I shall never get married and leave all you blessed people at home, but just in case I did, wouldn't it be jolly to have you all come and visit me, that is, if I should live in New York? Now 'where am I at?' as Charlie says. (Dear old boy; hug him for his sister, please.) Oh, yes, at the depot, only I stopped to put in all that about Mr. Jerome.

"Mr. Karstairs and Nina met us at the train. I introduced Mrs. Brown to them, and then asked Mr. Karstairs if he would please give the address that Mrs. Brown had written on a card to some cab-driver so that the poor lady wouldn't get lost.

"He insisted upon her coming right in the carriage with us—wasn't it nice of him?—and asked for the check of her trunk. Poor Mrs. Brown. She wouldn't let him have it at first. She said 'Silas had given her instructions as to how she mustn't give it to nobody but a man with 'Express on his cap.' " Finally she gave in, though she 'didn't see how them folks would know which was her trunk.'

"Her sister lived near, and I didn't forget to thank her for letting me travel with her, before she got out.

"Of course, at school I have heard Nina talk about New York society and some people she called the 'four hundred,' or was it thousand? I forget. But I never expected in all my life to drive in a carriage all lined with blue satin, with two men on the box, and rubber things on

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the wheels—so that you can talk—behind a pair of horses you would think were running away every minute. We drove down Fifth Avenue—the ‘aristocratic thoroughfare of the city,’ Mr. Jerome calls it—but it was too dark to see much.

“This house is splendid. Why, it’s almost as big as that hotel we stopped at last summer, and my room is larger than our parlor at home.

“Mrs. Karstairs is lovely, but so sort of queenly and dressed up that I just guess Nina doesn’t dare to hug her as I hug you. She said she hoped I would try and not be homesick, etc., just as people always say to girls in books—then she went to a horse show, and I’m going to-night.

“We didn’t have breakfast till nine o’clock this morning. At eleven Nina and I went for a walk up Fifth Avenue, and stopped at the dressmaker’s. I ordered some of the dresses and lots of other things that Uncle Robert gave me the check for. It seems an awful lot to spend on clothes.

“On the way home we went down Broadway, where all the lovely big stores are, and had soda water with ice cream in it at ‘Huyler’s.’ Think of eating ice cream in November! I asked Nina if they took it all winter. She laughed and said: ‘Mercy, yes; all the year round.’ We met Mr. Jerome. He walked home with us and stayed to lunch. At four the victoria came and Nina took me to the park. I never saw anything so beautiful, and everybody in New York must have a carriage; there

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were thousands of them. Nina bowed so much that I wonder she hasn't got a stiff neck. We only just got home half an hour ago, and now I must stop scribbling, mother dear, and dress for dinner. Nina says she just loves your photograph. I wonder what she'd do if she saw the original! Oceans of love to you all, from

“MARIE.”

II.

“NEW YORK, November 20, 189—.

“MY BELOVEDEST OF MOTHERS:

“So much has happened since I wrote last week that I scarcely know where to begin to tell you all about it. Well, of course, there was the horse show. It was fine. Such horses, such crowds of people, and such dresses!

“It was at the ‘Madison Square Garden,’ a huge place with a tower, and we had a box in the center of the building. We didn't pay half as much attention to the horses as we did to the people. It was a regular reception, and I met so many of the Karstairs' friends that I'm sure I won't know a quarter of them again.

“Mr. Jerome's four-in-hand coach got the first prize, and we were all so glad. He has asked us to drive out to the Country Club on it next Wednesday, and take lunch there.

“Oh! then I was so excited when the mounted policemen pretended to catch a runaway horse, that I caught hold of Mr. Jerome's arm; he was next to me. I know I should have been more careful, for I saw Nina glance

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at her mother, but he only laughed and said, 'Did it make you nervous, Miss Weston?'

"After the show we went to Delmonico's to supper. Mr. Jerome went with us and a Mr. Prescott. I don't like Mr. Prescott, but I guess Nina does, for she blushes almost every time he speaks to her. Mr. Karstair made Madame Lagrange, the dressmaker, send me one of my ball gowns yesterday, for the Assembly Ball last evening. I just wish you could see it, that's all. It's pink, sort of satin, and is trimmed with a lot of lovely lace; only I'm sure you will think it's cut too low around the neck, and there are big puffs for sleeves. I've found out that Mr. Jerome's first name is 'Gordon,' and that he is 'junior.'

"On his card, which came with a lovely bouquet of pink roses last evening, it said: 'Mr. Gordon Jerome, Jr., Calumet Club.'

"Poor fellow! I wonder if he always lives at a stupid club?

"We stayed till nearly two o'clock this morning at the Assembly, and even then I hadn't dances enough to go around. Imagine! To-day my name is in the papers, and a description of my gown. Mrs. Karstairs says I'm an 'emphatic success,' and if that means getting all the cards and invitations that have come for me, I surely must be one.

"We went to a large reception this afternoon. The people are very rich, and Nina says they are trying to 'buy a title' for their daughter. What do you suppose that means? I didn't like to ask. There were a lot of girls receiving

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with the daughter, and lovely, dreamy music came from a big square landing on the stairs. My! The people talked so loud I could hardly hear my own voice.

"To-night we are going to the Lyceum Theater to see 'The Wife.' Mrs. Karstairs has asked Mr. Prescott and a Mr. Remsen to go with us. Nina says Mr. Remsen's a 'desperate flirt,' so I guess I'll be very careful what I say to him, wouldn't you? They want me to stay till April. May I? Mrs. Karstairs sends kind regards, and says she will write to you herself.

"With best love,

"MARIE.

"P. S.—I forgot to tell you that Mr. Remsen sent me a big box of cut flowers this morning. Nina says he's smitten, whatever that may be; but I think the way he talks is too silly for anything."

"3 Fifth Avenue, Christmas Day.

"MY DARLING MOTHER:

"Next to being at home I'd rather be here than any place else to-day. They are all very kind and have made me beautiful presents, but the box you sent me pleased me most. I sent you my photograph and hope you will recognize your daughter in the gown she wore to the Charity Ball. Mrs. Karstairs thinks them perfect, and Mr. Jerome asked me for one. I had to tell him I couldn't give it to him, for Nina looked so shocked when I spoke of it to her. I'm awfully sorry now, for I received a superb

and Other Stories.

basket of bonbons from him this morning, together with a big bunch of violets—almost too big to wear to church, as he wanted me to do.

“I think you would like him, mother. He is different from the other men I’ve met here—more dignified, and never a bit ‘gossipy.’ His father and mother live out West, and he’s an only child.

“Oh, I am so glad I may stay till April, for I want to see a whole ‘season’ here.

“There was the second Assembly and the first Patriarch’s ball on last week, and the papers called me ‘Miss Weston, of Maine.’ Just as if Maine was a city.

“Mother, what will you think when I tell you that Mr. Remsen proposed to me last night? I cannot tell you how sorry and, I must say, disgusted I was. Why, we’ve only known of each other’s existence for five weeks! It was at a dance the Hamiltons gave for their *débutante* daughter, and it happened after supper, while I was ‘sitting out’ an interlude with him.

“I know he thinks me ‘strong-minded,’ for I gave him a regular lecture on the solemnity of marriage and the dreadfulness of making a mistake.

“I might just as well have talked to a dummy, for he only stared at me through that ridiculous eyeglass of his, and drawled, when I had finished: ‘You have the most extraordinary ideas of matrimony I ever heard, by Jove!’

“I may be wrong, mamma—I hope I am—but from what I’ve seen here, it seems to me

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that marriages are too often cases of 'knocking down to the highest bidder' the fairest rosebud of the season. Nina becomes more and more infatuated with Richard Prescott, and he appears to be very devoted.

"There was a charity sale at Sherry's last Tuesday.

"We helped Mrs. Dunbar-Rives at the flower booth, Nina and I. Mr. Jerome won a very handsome basket of orchids and hyacinths, which Thorley presented to the sale, and when I got home that night I found it there for me. He always has such pretty ideas, and does everything so quietly. I can't help wondering if he's ever been in love. Nina says all the men she knows are engaged more than once, sometimes, before they marry. I don't believe he's that sort a bit.

"Mrs. Karstairs is going to chaperone a party of ten of us to Lakewood for the holidays. We leave to-morrow and return on the 10th.

"The two De Vere girls, Miss Barton, Nina and I; and Mr. Prescott (of course), Lord Lynn, a mere boy, with a droll lisp, Mr. Romeyn and his brother, and Mr. Jerome are the men. I wonder if it's because I'm growing older that I've stopped 'anticipating' pleasure?

"Sometimes I look at my list of engagements for the day and long to stay at home and be alone for a few hours at least. There's so much to think about and I don't have time.

"My dear love to all, and best wishes for a happy Christmas Day.

"MARIE."

and Other Stories.

“NEW YORK, April 3d.

“DEAR, DEAR MAMMA:

“Expect me home on Wednesday. I am crazy to see you, and to tell you all about my visit. You’ll have to listen to the whole thing over again from beginning to end.

“And then—there’s something else. Mr. Jerome has done me the honor of asking me to be his wife, and—I have accepted—on condition of your approval and father’s, of course.

“He is so true, mother, not “goody-goody” one bit—but the very soul of honor.

“I never dreamed of his loving me, until—well, until we went to Lakewood last December, and then I guess you read between the lines of my letters, from what you said in one of yours.

“He is writing to father, to-day, and so is Mr. Karstairs.

“They are all delighted, and I shall be Nina’s cousin; won’t it seem funny?

“You will see him next Saturday—and don’t you think we might make his room at the hotel look a little more cheerful and homelike before he comes? I’m afraid he will find a vast difference between his apartments and our poor little hotel, but he says—well, I won’t tell you what he says. It would look so foolish on paper.

“I suppose people will say that I am marrying for money—he’s dreadfully rich, Nina told me so—but we—he and I—know that I’m not, so I don’t care.

“Can a girl love too well when she loves a

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man like him? I hope not, for, mother, he has become my very life.

"Good-by till Wednesday.

"MARIE."

II.

"THAT ye may so live together in this life, that in the world to come ye may have life everlasting. Amen."

A solemn hush hung over the great church, as the rector pronounced these words of benediction upon the pair before him.

Then, suddenly the old, glad strains of the wedding march burst from the organ loft, as bride and bridegroom turned to leave the altar. Many in the large and fashionable assemblage spoke of the charming manner in which Mrs. Jerome recognized her friends and acquaintances in passing; others, of the magnificence of her wedding-gown and jewels, but those who knew her best were struck by the look of peace and joy in the girl's dark eyes, which they never forgot.

"Now, tell me how it all happened," said Mrs. Dunbar-Rives to her sister, as they drove down Fifth Avenue, *en route* for the reception. She had returned from abroad only yesterday, and had heard none of the particulars of the case.

"Well, you see, it was like this," began Mrs. Le Roy, settling herself comfortably against the cushions of the brougham: "Gordon

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Jerome fell in love with the girl while she was visiting the Karstairs, and followed her home. She lived up in Maine, you know, and was a school-friend of Nina's at Farmington. A month later the engagement appeared in all the papers, on the Karstairs' authority. Gordon spent the best part of the summer up North, and in October a wealthy bachelor uncle of the young woman hired the Fleming's house for the season; her family moved in—*et les voilà.*"

"She is a sweet girl, one any man might be proud of," said Mrs. Dunbar-Rives decisively; "but we all know Gordon, my dear, and shouldn't expect too much—should we? Ah, here we are," she went on, as the carriage stopped before a handsome residence, "and it's going to be a dreadful crush!"

III.

"631 Fifth Avenue, November 12th.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER:

"Home again, and I'm so glad!

"Europe is all very well for a few months, but one does get tired of sightseeing in time. How does it seem to you to be back in the North again? The restfulness of it must be delicious.

"Do you know it is just two years since I came to New York first? And I have been married almost a year. Somehow it all seems longer. The Horse Show opens the season this week. Our box is one of the best to be had,

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and Gordon has five horses entered. We drive so much that it's growing positively monotonous, and I believe I know every tree in the park.

"A few of the 'bachelors' are getting up a ball for next month—quite an elaborate affair. Gordon wants me to wear the gown in which I was presented in London last season, but I don't think I shall, it's so heavy.

"We give a dinner of fifty, and afterward a dance, next Thursday, in honor of Nina's engagement to Dick Prescott. It has just been announced, and they are to be married in Easter week.

"Gordon is home so little now, and I can't bear going everywhere alone.

"Won't you come and spend the winter with us, mother? I want you so much.

"Your loving daughter,

"MARIE JEROME."

"631 Fifth Avenue, March 11th.

"Your visit did me so much good, mother dear, and now I miss you sadly.

"I have tried to follow out your advice, tried to shut my eyes to many things, to be patient and cheerful; tried most of all to win back my husband's love—and have failed.

"He has never been the same since that night in London, when I found him reading—that woman's letter.

"His coldness, his neglect—except when the eyes of the world are upon us—are intolerable.

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How I trusted him! how he made me trust him from the first.

"He and Dick Prescott are always together. I should like to tell Nina everything, to warn her, but I dare not. Besides, we think so differently about some things.

"Write to me, mother, and comfort me.

"MARIE."

"NEW YORK, May 22, 189—.

"Mother, I am coming home. I cannot, will not remain here any longer. The insincerity, the taunts, the pity of 'society' are killing me.

"They almost laugh at me for caring, when all the world knows my husband is untrue to me; but, thank God! I can still be true to myself.

"Dear Mrs. Dunbar-Rives! She has been my best friend through it all. It is at her advice, as well as at my lawyer's, that I have now begun proceedings for an absolute divorce. Do you blame me, mother? Was he not all a girl could desire, as a lover?

"I scarcely see him now; he has been away for some weeks, and to-morrow I go to Mrs. Dunbar-Rives, until I can arrange to come to you.

"Oh, I long for the peace and quiet of the country; even though every step of it, for miles around, will be a memory; a reminder of that happy summer, before I learned the saddest fate of a woman.

"MARIE."

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NOT MISS HIGGINS.

THEY were still laughing over some unusually brilliant remark of Fred Trevor's, when the door opened and Miss Maitland entered the room. She was not a beautiful girl, but she was always called pretty and attractive in appearance, and her manner was charming. She stood for a moment on the threshold, then went to her mother and dropped into a low chair beside her.

"Oh, I am tired!" she exclaimed, "and I have just had quite an adventure in the woods. No, not a word about it, till after tea," as a volley of interrogatories followed. "Yes, cake, please, Mr. Patteson—and a big piece, too—I'm famished. Freddy!" indignantly, casting a look full of reproach at Mr. Trevor, who was urging her to hurry up and eat, "would you have me choke?"

"Not I!" responded that young man gallantly; then he added, with truly cousinly candor, "or, at least, not until we have heard your adventure."

"Well, it was like this," began Miss Maitland, forgetful of her resolve to keep them waiting in her eagerness to begin: "Mrs. Higgins, at Cousin Mildred's lodge, promised me a dear

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little kitten as soon as it could be taken from its mother; to-day I felt like a long walk, and as you were all too lazy—too lazy!" she repeated, with a glance of withering scorn directed full at the unfortunate Mr. Trevor, "to accompany me, I went alone."

"That's me!" whispered Mr. Trevor, ungrammatically, in a conscience-stricken way; then, aloud: "Score one on the shovel for that, Mary Ann."

"My dear Fred," said Mrs. Maitland, when the general laugh had subsided a little, "I really must ask you to leave that horrid slang in London, or at any rate confine it to the smoking room here." Her tone was severe, but she smiled as she spoke, and cast a loving, if reproachful, glance at her incorrigible nephew.

"Yes, aunt," said the culprit meekly.

"Gladys, dear," to his cousin, with exaggerated politeness, "I fear I interrupted you. Pray continue your narrative, and no further comment shall escape me, I promise you."

"Higgins showed me the kittens," Miss Maitland went on, "and said I might surely have mine next week. Then she begged me to wait for some of her famous currant bread, which, she explained, 'is just in the hoven, and with such a crust, Miss!' I promised to do so, and sat down before the fire in her little sitting room with a kitten in my lap.

"It was snowing hard, you know, and I wore an old gown and heavy boots and the wind had blown my hair all about. Altogether, I might easily have been mistaken for the lodge-keep-

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er's daughter—and so I was!" An astonished exclamation burst from her audience, as she paused to laugh heartily over it all.

"Well, I was sitting there, looking into the fire, my chin upon my hands, when suddenly I heard footsteps behind me, and turning I saw a strange man standing there in the middle of the room. Escape was my first thought, he startled me so, but my fear soon changed to surprise, for he said: 'Is your mother in, my girl? I want to see if I can board my man here for a week, while I am in town.' Then, I don't know whatever made me do it, but quick as a flash up I jumped and courtesied to him, as I answered, still holding the kitten. 'I'll find mother, sir, and tell her you are here,' and rushed out of the room. I met Higgins in the hall, carrying a plate of currant bread and a glass of milk in her hands. I hurriedly repeated what had happened, and implored her to leave the gentleman in ignorance of my true name and station. Then, regardless of her astonished 'Lor', Miss! whatever made you?' I seized the plate in one hand, the glass in the other, and fled to the kitchen, where I sat down to enjoy my repast. In a few moments I heard voices, as Higgins showed her mysterious visitor to the door, and could hear him ask: 'Is she your only child, Mrs. Higgins?'

"So they were evidently talking of me; I was the (*soi-disant*) 'child' in question, and it was too ridiculous to hear poor old Higgins, who had never had a daughter, mumbling something about 'a son at sea.' She was

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hoping, I am sure, that I was not within earshot!

“Soon after that I started for home, and came by the short cut through the woods. It had stopped snowing, so I went a little out of my way to the holly hedge near Cousin Mildred’s deer park to get some holly for my room. I managed to cut quite a little with my pocket scissors, and had tied it together securely with my handkerchief, when, suddenly, a curious sniffing sound near by startled me. Close beside me, eyeing me intently, stood the largest dog I have ever seen.

“‘Oh, you beauty!’ I exclaimed, involuntarily, and at the sound of my voice a head was poked quickly around the end of the hedge, then as quickly disappeared. Another moment and the hero of my adventure stood before me. ‘Is it really Miss Higgins? I hope my dog did not frighten you,’ he said, raising his hat. ‘Hector, you wretch! Come here!’ he added, for the dog had thrust his cold nose into my hand, and stood wagging his tail with delight, as I stroked his head.

“‘Oh, I like him!’ I hastened to say; then, the spirit of mischief still rampant within me, I inquired with just a *soupçon* of Miss Higgins’ cockney, if ‘my mother’ had been able to accommodate him?

“He answered me very politely, but kept his eyes fixed so steadily upon me that I felt sure he must know I was deceiving him, and I almost wished I hadn’t. Then he insisted upon seeing me home, and he carried my holly for

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me, too, all the way back to the lodge; for, of course, then I did not dare tell him who I was or where I lived."

Here Mr. Trevor breathed a scarcely audible "What a sell!" which Miss Maitland heard and promptly resented.

"You may call it a 'sell'—whatever that is—if you like, Teddy," she said reprovingly, "but it was no joke walking all that way, and then, when he had gone, having to run home, so as not to be out late alone. Yes, mamma, it was very wrong, I know, to be in the woods with a strange man, but I was 'Miss Higgins' then, which wasn't exactly the same as being 'Miss Maitland,' of course; and after all, it was no harm, for I never expect to see my handsome cavalier again—it was very evident that he was a stranger here."

"Is that all, Gladys?" asked her little sister, who was sitting on a rug before the fire.

"All, Dorothy!" repeated Miss Maitland, severely. "Isn't that quite enough to happen in one day?"

"Well, you said it was an 'adventure,' and nurse says there are always bears and lions and fairy princes in truly adventures," said the child in a disappointed tone.

"Next time, Gladys," said Mr. Trevor, "please have a bear, a lion, or a fairy prince in your adventure—the latter preferred. Hooray! the dressing bell. I say, Dorothy, I'll give you sixpence if you catch me before I get to my door!" and away they ran, followed more leisurely by the others to dress for dinner.

II.

THE hunt breakfast was over, and the followers of the Sussex foxhounds were assembled in the field one bright November morning, eager for the run. All of Mrs. Maitland's house party had come to the "Meet," either riding or driving, and Gladys, on her favorite mount—a glossy bay—was talking and laughing with a number of her friends when a lady rode up to their group followed closely by a man, faultlessly attired in a "pink." Just then Fred Trevor, who was never very far from Miss Maitland, felt some one clutch frantically at his coat tails, and turning heard his cousin's voice whisper imploringly, "Teddy, come quick! I want to speak to you."

Without a word, he followed her to another part of the field; when she asked, excitedly, pointing with her riding-crop to the group they had just left: "Who is that man with Cousin Mildred? The one who came up with her a moment ago?"

"That? Why, it's Lester Sedgewick; old pal of mine at Oxford, you know, and the best fellow alive. I'll go get him, if you like, and——"

"You will do nothing of the sort," interrupted Gladys; then, desperately: "I suppose I may as well tell you, Teddy, that he, your 'old pal,' and I are already acquainted."

"Eh, what?" asked Mr. Trevor in amazement. "Where did you meet him?"

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"At the lodge," answered Miss Maitland, shortly but emphatically.

Mr. Trevor stared for a minute, then gave way to his mirth.

"Oh, I say!" he gasped, when he could sufficiently command his voice. "Old Sedgewick, eh? But you'll have to meet him, as he is visiting Cousin Mildred, and has no doubt heard of you. May I present him formally to you, 'Miss Higgins'?"

"Don't present him at all, till it's absolutely necessary," said 'Miss Higgins,' decidedly.

"Well, there's no eluding him, *ma cousine*," went on Mr. Trevor unmercifully; "he has bought the old Meredith place here, you know."

"Teddy! He hasn't! I don't believe you!" exclaimed poor Gladys in despair.

"Oh, very well; perhaps I had better go ask him," began her cousin huffily, gathering up his reins.

"But, Teddy, think! I let him believe me to be 'Miss Higgins,' and I might easily have told him the truth. Oh, that odious kitten! I wish I had never heard of it!"

She was so evidently in earnest that Trevor's heart smote him.

"Never mind, little girl! I'll stick to you, and together we'll defy him!" he assured her good-naturedly.

"Ah! they've found!" he exclaimed, a moment afterward. "Come on, let's take that fence lower down," and together they started in the direction indicated by the baying of the hounds as that which they had taken. For half

an hour they rode "hard" and were well up with the hounds, when suddenly Gladys gave a little cry. "Oh, what a pity! Poor old Victor! He has dropped a shoe, Teddy, and is going lame. I must take him home. No, you go on," she added, seeing him hold in his horse. "Hurry, and be in at the death."

"Well, if you don't mind," he commenced, but Miss Maitland shook her head, and with a hasty "good-by, take care of yourself," he was off again after the hounds.

Gladys turned her horse's head toward home, and rode slowly across a couple of fields, when suddenly she saw something which filled her with a nameless fear. Lester Sedgewick's horse was standing riderless beside a low hedge, and not a dozen yards beyond lay the prostrate form of his owner. Every particle of color left her face, and her hand trembled, as Gladys rode quietly up to Sedgewick's horse, and taking hold of the bridle led him to a fence near-by, where she tied him first, and then, dismounting, told Victor to "stand." She knelt beside the unconscious man, and raising his head gently from the ground, rested it against her knee, repeating his name over and over as she did so. Then, as she was wondering if she should leave him and go for help, the dark eyes opened and looked into hers, in a bewildered way, before he said, faintly:

"Miss—Miss Higgins! Is it really you?"

"Are you hurt?" asked the girl softly, almost fearing to ask the question.

"I think not. I was only a little stunned by

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the fall," he answered quickly, "and shall be all right again in a moment or two," he added, closing his eyes with a sigh.

"Oh! I am afraid you are hurt," persisted Gladys, a little embarrassed by her unusual position.

A little pause—then Mr. Sedgewick slowly reopened his eyes, and rising to his feet, put out his hands to Miss Maitland, and helped her from the ground, saying: "Now I am quite myself again. Let me thank you, Miss Higgins; you have been very good to me, and your voice calling me by name restored me to consciousness. May I ask how you found it out?" he went on, as with his hand resting on her arm for support, they walked slowly to where the horses had been left.

He smiled as he spoke, and Gladys looking straight before her did not see the gleam of fun in his eyes. "Did you not tell my mother your name, sir, the day you came to the lodge?" she answered calmly, resolving to play the rôle to the end, if possible.

"Did I? Ah! perhaps I did," he answered, as he helped her to remount Victor, glancing, as he did so, from the handsome hunter to the saddle-cloth, embroidered with the Maitland crest; then from the girl in her tight-fitting habit of dark blue, to the jewelled handle of her crop, and the dainty gloved hand which held it.

At that moment their eyes met, and something in Sedgewick's glance made Miss Maitland blush guiltily, as it occurred to her that it was scarcely in keeping for the daughter of a

lodge-keeper to be thus attired and mounted on a hunter valued at two hundred pounds. What must he think of her?

"I am afraid you think me a very poor horseman, Miss Higgins," said Sedgewick, breaking in upon her thoughts just then. "The fact is, my horse and I are too much of the same disposition to make it quite pleasant on all occasions. We are both stubborn, and when, this morning, he had evidently made up his mind not to take that hedge, I decided that he must. The result was my fall—after his submission. But how came you to be riding by at that precise moment, my good Samaritan?"

"Victor lost a shoe in the field, so I had to give up the run and bring him home," began Gladys; then, impulsively deciding to give herself over to the enemy, she said, hurriedly: "Mr. Sedgewick, I have a confession to make to you. When I first saw you at Mrs. Higgins' lodge you, very naturally, mistook me for Mrs. Higgins' daughter—for which I have not quite forgiven you"—with a charming blush. "And, afterward in the woods, I let you believe me to be Miss Higgins, thinking I should never see you again. But now that I know who you are, and that we are to be neighbors, I want to tell you that I am——"

"Miss Maitland," said Sedgewick quietly, lifting his hat.

A little exclamation of surprise burst from Gladys' lips. "How did you know? When did you find it out?" she inquired in amazement.

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"Well, I, too, have a little confession to make, if you will allow me," answered Sedgewick smilingly. "When you let me carry the holly for you on that never-to-be-forgotten occasion of our first meeting, you forgot, perhaps, that it was tied with a handkerchief, and that in one corner of that handkerchief a name which was not 'Higgins' was embroidered."

"And you have known all the time. Oh! how could you?" breathed Miss Maitland, but she hung her head and looked a little confused, while Sedgewick continued: "It flashed across my mind then and there that you were intentionally deceiving me, and, for revenge, I took you back to the lodge."

"Well, upon my word!" said Miss Maitland, deliberately lifting her head and looking him full in the face. "If that isn't about the meanest thing I ever heard of."

"Hear me out," urged her companion; "the revenge may not be all on my side, for you gave me a far longer walk than I did you, and made me lose my tea in the bargain."

"I? How?" questioned Miss Maitland.

"Do you think for an instant that I would have left you to walk home alone so late, and knowing, as I did, how far you would have to go?" he asked reproachfully. "No, Miss Maitland. I followed you home, and kept you in sight until the doors of 'Elmside' closed upon you and I knew you were safe."

"You followed me?" said Gladys, half-interrogatively; then she burst into a peal of merry laughter. "Oh, how I must have made you

walk," she said presently, "for I ran—I simply tore all the way."

"Don't speak of it—I know it," he begged. "Ah! here we are, at Elmside. Miss Maitland"—turning suddenly to her—"will you allow me the privilege of an old friend of the family, and let me take you to drive to-morrow at four?"

"I shall be delighted," responded Gladys warmly; and more than once that day she found herself wondering if the sun had ever shone so brightly before or why it was that life seemed so unusually sweet and she so unspeakably happy.

III.

"AND now, my friends, before the ladies leave us, I have some news for you," said Mr. Maitland, rising from his seat at the table. It was New Year's Eve, and dinner was over at "Elmside," still Mrs. Maitland had not left the room, she was evidently waiting for something.

A faint murmur of surprise passed from one to another of the guests, some twenty in number, who had been bidden to "ring out the Old and welcome in the New Year."

"It seems to me," continued their host, "that no more suitable occasion could present itself than now, as we stand on the threshold of a new year, to wish all happiness to two among us here to-night who have lately plighted their troth. I refer to my daughter, Gladys, and Mr.

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Sedgewick, and I propose drinking their health."

"Call that news?" asked Mr. Trevor, when every one had answered to the toast, and Mr. Sedgewick had spoken briefly of his happiness; "why, any one who wasn't totally blind could have seen that for weeks past!"

"Oh, Teddy!" burst indignantly from Gladys, at which they all laughed. Then followed congratulations and good wishes galore to the happy pair. An hour or so later, seeing her look somewhat fatigued, Sedgewick made his escape with Gladys to the library, where the lights were dim, and a roaring fire was blazing.

"Wasn't it all lovely, Lester?" asked Gladys, when they were seated on a little sofa before the fire. "Father spoke so sweetly, and every one was very kind, but when your turn came and you said such nice things of me, I wanted to"—she paused and threw one white arm around his neck.

"Wanted to what, darling?" he asked fondly, pressing his lips to her hand.

"I wanted to cry," finished Miss Maitland, with a little tremble in her voice.

"To cry! Why, Gladys, my pet, did it make you unhappy to——"

"Unhappy! *Lester!*" with deep reproach. "It was because I was thinking that I had never been perfectly happy in my life until——"

"Until?" he repeated softly.

"Until I knew that you loved me," she whispered.

THAT TELEGRAM.

“ Dai-sy, Dai-sy.
Give me your answer true;
I'm half cra-zy,
All for the love of you ”—

sang the gay young voice of some one passing under my window.

“ It won't be a stylish marriage,
For I can't afford a carriage,”

I went on, involuntarily taking up the refrain. “Alas! There is more truth than poetry in that,” I sighed, my eyes roving restlessly around my shabbily furnished bachelor apartments.

I thought of my own Daisy, and how she had told me that she did not care for all the riches in the land, so long as we had each other; and then I dropped into my old armchair and fell a-dreaming.

I saw her, beautifully gowned, and riding in a splendid victoria, behind two dashing bays, but there was a sad, far-off look in her eyes which I had never seen there, and the man who sat beside her was one whom I knew to be my rival—a man of wealth and influence who had sought her hand.

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I stood on the corner and her carriage passed close to me, but she did not seem to see me, and I turned back in despair to these same lodgings, where I had denied myself so many of the luxuries of life, to put by a tidy sum for the home we had planned together. Ah! small need of money now for such a purpose, I thought. Then there came a knock at my door, and I awoke from my reverie and started up, thanking God that it was all a dream.

"A tilligram, surr."

It was the voice of my landlady's maid-of-all-work, and I hastened to obey her call and opened the door. With a grimy hand she handed me the yellow envelope and smiled genially.

"I hopes it's no bad news, surr?" she remarked questioningly.

"Thank you. I hope not," I answered, and closed the door. Then I tore open the message. Twice—three times—I read the words, till at last they swam before my eyes and, dropping the paper, I sank into the nearest chair and covered my face with my hands. Even then I could see those words; they seemed seared into my brain. "Forgive me, Jack. I cannot marry you. Come to-morrow at five—not sooner—and I shall explain. DAISY."

It was all too horrible, too unheard of, to be true. Only to-day had I seen her, and she had said—but pshaw! what did it matter now what she had said? Everything was over between us.

And then all at once my dream came back to me with startling vividness.

Again I saw her seated in her carriage with the man of her choice, looking like a little queen in her costly garments. Was it for this she had given me back my love and reclaimed her own? "Come to-morrow at five, and I shall explain." "Explain!" What explanation was there for her to make? That she had weighed my love in the balance—together with his gold—and had found it wanting? "To-morrow at five"—an eternity until then. It was now ten in the evening; nineteen weary hours to be passed—somehow.

In vain I tried to read; her face came between me and the pages of the brief I had attempted to scan. Then I resolved to write to those at home. "My dear mother," I began, "I have a few moments to spare, and so hasten to answer your letter of the twenty-fifth inst. I am, of course, very busy, but spend much of my leisure time with—" Ah, with whom? No, I cannot write to-night without betraying something of my misery, I thought, and tore the paper into a hundred pieces.

And then I drew from my pocket a little photograph, and gazed long and lovingly on the pictured face of a "sweet girl graduate." How well I remembered the evening she had given it to me; that day she had promised to be my wife. How pretty she had looked then—the lamplight falling on her golden hair, and on the blue gown she wore. Her gray eyes had been wet with tears—tears of joy, she told me.

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But now where was the love which was to last through all eternity? Who had broken the bond that bound us together?

How long I sat there I never knew before sleep, kind, dreamless sleep, gave me rest.

It was eight o'clock when I awoke next morning, and for a moment forgetting all that had passed, was surprised to find myself dressed and sitting in my arm chair. Then my eye fell upon that hateful yellow paper, and remembering all, I stooped to pick up the little photograph which had fallen on the floor beside me.

It was a long, dreary day at my place of business, and my little office boy glanced reproachfully at me, when more than once I reprimanded him severely for some trifling offense.

Four o'clock, at last!

I started up, and donned my hat and overcoat. In sixty minutes now I should know all—the whole truth.

It still lacked five minutes to the appointed hour when I reached West Seventy-sixth Street, and rang the bell of No. —.

"Yes, Miss Marvin was at home," the maid assured me, and I went into the pretty drawing-room, my heart growing heavier with every step.

The portières at the further end of the room parted, and Daisy came toward me, a heavenly smile on her charming face.

"I heard your voice, Jack, and didn't wait for you to be announced. How are you, dear?"

She said it so simply, so naturally, expecting no doubt, a warmer welcome than the stiff hand-

and Other Stories.

shake I gave her. I turned and looked out of the window, waiting for her to speak.

She glanced curiously at me for a moment, then, noting, perhaps, the look of misery on my face, she asked softly: "What is it, Jack? Your mother—she is not ill?"

"My mother is quite well, thank you," I answered coldly.

How could she think of even my mother now?

"Some business, then? Come, sit here by me and explain all about it. I'll try to understand," with a little coaxing pat on my arm.

"Explain!" That word again! It roused me to speech. "That is why I am here—to have you explain!" I began suddenly. "That is to be your pleasure, not mine, certainly," I added, with an ill-concealed sneer.

"I—explain—Jack? Why, what do you mean?" she asked, her eyes wide with wonder.

"What do I mean, indeed! What do you mean, rather?" I retorted, now wholly indignant.

"I mean nothing, and I must ask you to be more explicit," she returned quietly, with gentle dignity.

"Nothing! You call it 'nothing' to become engaged to a fellow—who loves you—and then to throw him over for wealth and a fine position? You think it is 'nothing' to——"

"Throw a fellow over—wealth—position——" she interrupted, repeating my words in a dazed sort of way.

"Well, were those not your reasons for your treatment of me?" I demanded, and, catching

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her suddenly by the arm, I turned her face to me.

"Tell me," I whispered hoarsely, "was it for him?"

A little pause, then: "Jack! You are cruel—cruel!" and I heard a half-stifled sob. It gave me courage to ask the next question.

"Daisy, my sweet, are you sorry you sent me that telegram? Didn't you know it would almost break my heart?" I was seated beside her on the divan now, and my arm was near, very near her slender waist.

"What telegram? I—never—sent—you—a—telegram—in—all—my life," she said, slowly but perfectly distinctly.

"Daisy! Do you know what you are saying?" I asked breathlessly.

"Of course I do, and I'll repeat it: I never sent you a telegram in my life."

"Then what is the meaning of this?" I exclaimed, drawing the dispatch from my pocket and handing it to her. She read it through, and gave it back to me.

"You believed it was from me? Oh, Jack! You know it wasn't."

One look into those clear gray eyes, and I was content.

"Forgive me!" I whispered, pressing my lips to hers. "I shall never doubt you again."

"But I should like to know who really did send it," I said, after a pause.

"Ha! Ha! Wouldn't you, though?" came in triumphant accents from the adjoining room, startling us both; and again the portières

and Other Stories.

parted, this time to disclose a boy some fifteen years of age—my future brother-in-law. Like lightning it flashed across our minds that he was the culprit, and, starting up, I hurried toward him. But the youthful offender was too quick for me, and darted up the stairs with a war-whoop of exultation.

“Hooray!” he shouted from on high, as Daisy and I stood threateningly below. “Hooray! I caught you, Jack! April fool!”

It was the first of April.

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HIS MESSENGER.

I HAD finished my solitary Christmas dinner and stood staring moodily out of the hotel window, at the endless procession of carriages passing on Fifth Avenue, when, all at once, I seemed to again hear the glorious voice I had heard at the morning service proclaim the old sweet tidings of peace and joy. Then with a strange feeling of loneliness there came to me a longing to share my good fortune with others less fortunate than I—a desire to render some service to the needy.

I was staying at the Holland House, having been summoned by my lawyers to New York to hear read the "last will and testament" of my late uncle, Charles Spencer, who, having been a childless widower, had kindly endowed me, his next of kin, with all his worldly goods, and with what was of still more value to me—a struggling barrister—his worldly gold. With a new and pleasant sensation of being able to afford any luxury I craved, I turned from the window, and donned my heavy fur-lined coat with a sigh of satisfaction. Taking up my hat, I passed quickly out into the street, and scarcely realizing the direction I had involuntarily taken, I reached Madison Square.

Just a little abashed by the uncertainty of

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my mission, I stood for a few moments in front of the Hoffman House, scanning with unusual curiosity the faces of the passersby, but seeing no one apparently in need of alms.

"Please, sir, would you give me a few pennies?"

It was the usual request of the street urchin, close at my elbow, but in this voice there was such refinement, such pathetic sweetness that I turned toward the speaker. Such a sad little face! Such great, mournful eyes looking fearlessly up into mine, sending a wave of memories surging through my heart by their likeness to those other eyes I had known and loved long ago. "Yes, my boy, I'll give you some pennies," I answered readily, and the wistful face brightened perceptibly in the lamplight. "Want to get a good Christmas dinner, eh?" I added, smiling down at him.

"Oh, no, sir, it's not for that. But you see my mother's sick; too sick to give music lessons now. She makes me go to school, and she won't let me beg; she wouldn't like it if she knew I asked you for the pennies. But then, sir," and here the lad's eyes left my face for a moment, and he glanced eagerly at the bright half-dollar I held between my fingers; "it's Christmas, you know, and—and she's had nothing to eat all day, so I asked you first for the money, because"—the cold little fingers were nervously interlaced—"because——"

"Don't be afraid, my little man. Tell me why you asked me 'first.'"

"Because, sir, when I saw you, you looked

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like a picture mother has at home. She says it is some one she knew when she was a girl, and rich, and she carries it with her always. I was named for him, and—but—oh, sir, you looked so sort of kind that I asked you to help me," finished the child, a little quiver in his voice.

Clearly here was my wished-for opportunity; here was "some good to be done."

Slipping the half-dollar into the boy's hand, I cut short his delighted thanks by closing my fingers tightly over his own, as I led him across the crowded thoroughfare.

Ten minutes later we were seated at a table in a quiet corner of Dorlon's oyster house, and I had ordered a dinner that made the blue eyes glisten with tears of joy. "How good you are, sir," he half whispered, leaning toward me, when a big bowl of hot soup had sent a little color to the tiny, pinched face. "What will mother say? Could I—might I save some of it for her? She's all alone, now father's gone, and I guess she's waiting for me, and wondering where I am."

"That'll be all right, my boy," said I, feeling happier than I had felt in years. "Eat all you want, and 'mother' shall have as much more."

I had taken a decided liking to the gentlemanly little fellow, and admiring his unselfish thoughtfulness, had resolved to take him home, see what could be done to help the sick mother, and if possible catch a glimpse of the picture which had so strangely drawn the little chap to me.

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"Now," said I presently, drawing out a notebook and pencil, "tell me your name, and where you live, and we will order a Christmas dinner that will make 'mother' well."

"I live at 300 West Thirty-first Street, answered the boy quickly; "and my name is Gerald Spencer Wentworth."

I started! It was my own name, Gerald Spencer;—and she, the poor, hungry mother, was the woman I had loved all my life, though a richer man than I had ever hoped to be had become her husband. "My little sweetheart," as I had so often called her, "my little love," and I had found her at last. This boy, then, was hers! That photograph, mine! It was the one thing she had kept, when hastened into a marriage with a man who had promised to reform, for her sake, and leave drink alone.

It was to this, then, that he had dragged her; lower and lower, to poverty, almost starvation. My proud little darling! Too proud to ask help of the friends who had known her before her marriage. The pencil had dropped from my trembling fingers, as I sat staring at the child before me, seeing in the boy's face her own image; her sweet soul shining through his eyes.

Hastily pulling myself together lest the boy should notice my emotion, I wrote the name and address in full, and adding a couple of bottles of rare old port to the other order, I surprised the waiter with a fee that made him promise to "see to it at once, sir, and have it sent."

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Hailing a hansom which was passing as we left the restaurant I told the driver where to go, bidding him drive as rapidly as possible; then, concluding it was time to explain matters to my namesake, who was almost speechless with amazement, I passed my arm around the little fellow and pressed him closely to me.

"Gerald," said I, "you were a dear boy to find me, and I thank you."

The blue eyes were swiftly raised to mine, then the dark head was pressed against my shoulder, with a quick sigh.

"Your mother and I were very old friends—very dear friends, once. Gerald, it was my picture you saw, and——"

"Why -- why," interrupted the boy excitedly, "then you are my Uncle Gerald, and I was named for you. Oh, goody!" he cried, grasping my hand in both his own. "Mother will be so glad. Do you know"—nestling once more against my willing arm, "every night, after she says her prayers, mother kisses your picture, and asks God to bless you and keep you, and sometimes—sometimes she cries, and when I ask her why, she says you are the one she loves best on earth, next to me, and that she'll never see you again. But now she will, won't she, Uncle Gerald? I guess God felt sorry that she cried, and sent me to find you."

I could not answer. The child's faith was stronger than my own had been or than hers, and a sob rose to my throat and choked back the words I would say.

"Father was drowned at sea," went on the

boy, answering, all unconsciously, the question I could not ask. 'He was going to England to make lots of money for us, and he never came back. I was little then, and don't remember much about it, but they told mother'—his voice sank to a whisper—"they told her that he had drank too much wine, and didn't know what he was doing when he jumped overboard. Mother cried lots, and kept looking at your picture, and once I heard her say, very low: 'Too late, too late! He has forgotten me.' Did you, Uncle Gerald? Oh, we're home."

The hansom had stopped before a large, clean-looking tenement, and telling the driver to wait, I followed Gerald up two flights of long stairs and halted before a door in the front of the house.

"Let me go in first, and we'll s'prise her," whispered my companion, and he opened the door noiselessly.

The dim flicker of a candle cast a streak of light into the hall and I heard the voice of my love.

"Gerald? Is it you, darling? How late you are. Did you stay and take supper with blind Andy?"

"No, mother, not with Andy; and oh! I've got a lovely s'prise for you, and you'll be so happy."

"Shall I be 'so happy,' dear? Well, let me have it now—for I want to be happy, oh, so badly."

I could wait no longer. Pushing the door open ever so gently I stepped into the room.

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A moment's silence as her eyes met mine, then a low bursting sob that shook her slender frame; and as I caught my fainting darling in my arms once again I heard the words "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men."

A LAST REQUEST.

“PARIS, May 16, 1893.

“MY DEAR TOM: Of course you received my cable from Havre, when we landed, but now here we are in Paris, and everything looks *couleur de rose* to ‘yours truly’ at present.

“Say, old man, you’ve crossed the ocean half a dozen times, I know: did it ever occur to you to think how much better you can get to know a girl in one week on board ship than in a season in town? There’s something—can’t quite describe it—that makes a fellow feel better acquainted with the people around him in general, and some in particular, when you know you’re *all together* on the mighty deep, with nothing but a few slender timbers, practically, and a bit of clever engineering to keep you all from the Great Unknown.

“Did I tell you before I left of whom our party was finally to consist? No; I’m sure I did not. There were the Vernons—Jack Vernon, you know—in our class at Harvard—married little Miss Mason last year; Bob Keating, his *fiancée*, a Miss Reynolds, and her mother, who, by the way, is a very chic little widow. Old Hastings, who joined us at the last moment, seems tremendously *épris* in that quarter.

“Then, last, but by no means least, there is

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the little girl with whom I have—or think I have—become so well acquainted, and her old sheepdog of an aunt, who scarcely lets the girl move from her side—worse luck!

“But we have managed to evade the old person once in a while, and the consequence is I am now, at this moment, desperately, madly in love with the dearest little girl who ever wore a 2A shoe (I know the number well, you see, as it has frequently been my pleasure to arrange the refractory laces of her little Oxford ties.) I can almost see you as you read all this, old man, sitting by the window, possibly, with your latest medical book, probably, and laughing *certainly* at my confession. I know what you are thinking; it is what you would say if I were there to hear it ‘How many times is this, Don?’” Then you will proceed to enumerate *mes petites affaires*. But this is the first time I have really been in love, Tom; the others, even Eleanore, cannot be named in the same breath with Kathleen—Miss Nevins. There! The name's out, and I meant to keep you in suspense till the last.

“Well, from our various conversations, I learned that she is an orphan, of considerable means, that she lives with her aunt, and that she is *en route* to visit her maternal grandfather in England. Miss Nevins expects to return home in September, so I have decided to stay over until then, in order to make the acquaintance of my uncle in Scotland, the chieftain of our clan. Then we can cross together again, and they might feel easier,

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you know, old chap, to have a man they know on board. The only trouble now is that I don't believe she cares a rap about me.

"Sometimes I think she may in time—that she does even—then something occurs to make me change my mind. Once, for instance, when I had been telling her how I wished our voyage together might never end—to see how she would take it—and she blushed divinely, I began to hope; then some cad of an officer came up, and she left me, quite too willingly, I thought, to promenade with him.

"But now we are all at the Continental, and twice I have had the honor of escorting her, with the aunt, *bien entendu*, to the Odéon and once to the opera.

"She — Miss Nevins — speaks French with such a pretty little accent that it is a pleasure to talk it with her, and we carry on needlessly long conversations in that language, with which 'the aunt' is unacquainted.

"They seem to be doing a great deal of shopping here, and spend a good quarter of every day 'fitting on' frocks and things. Yesterday I sat in a miserable *fiacre* from two P.M. till nearly four, while 'Milady' honored M. Doucet with a call. That was my own fault, however. I tell you all this, old fellow, because I know what a kindly interest you take in your good-for-nothing friend; and it's such a relief, sometimes, to unburden one's mind of the happiest as well as of the most wretched details of life. Let me say, *en somme*, that this time I am in earnest, and I hope, when next I write, to be

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able to tell you that Kathleen has consented to be my wife. By the bye, I met my aunt, Mrs. Gray, and those two pretty daughters of hers, driving in the Bois this morning.

"My cousin Eleanore looks lovelier than ever, and the sight of her brought back the past very vividly—but now that I've seen Kathleen, I know it was all for the best. Still I shall call at their hotel to-morrow.

"Write as usual to my bankers, Drexel, Harjes, Boulevard Haussmann; they will forward my mail, and I may stay some time in England, if all goes well.

"Love to the Pater when you see him, and 'be good to yourself.'

"As ever, yours,

"DONALD.

"TO THOMAS KEITH, ESQ., M.D."

Cablegram from Thomas Keith, M.D., New York, to Donald Cameron, Esq., care Drexel, Harjes & Co., Paris:

"May 17, 1893.

"Your father died this morning. Apoplexy. Will write to-day."

"NEW YORK, May 17, 1893.

"MY DEAR OLD DON: Needless for me to say how shocked and grieved I was by your father's death, or how sorry I am to be the one to impart the sad news to you. I was with him at the end, and his last words were for you,

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when he regained consciousness, and his power of speech for a time.

"As I bent over him he whispered: 'Tell Donald my dearest wish has been for him to marry Eleanore. She will make him happy. Ask him to forgive her impulsiveness, for my sake.' There was something else, so low that I could not hear it; then all was over, and so peacefully, Don.

"Your sister and brother both arrived to-day, and I will cable you the hour fixed for the services.

"A word of advice, Don, my boy, from an old friend.

"Don't make too much of that little difference between Miss Gray and yourself. She did not understand you, that was all; and you must confess you were a little bit brusque with her. I have an idea she is sorry she broke off the engagement so hastily. What do you think about it, eh?

"Try and see her when you go to Paris, for your father's sake as well as for your own, and I feel sure you will be glad in the end.

"Yours ever, TOM.

"Cameron Crag, LASSWADE, Scotland,

"June 30, 1893.

"DEAR OLD TOM: Except for the hasty note in answer to yours of May 17th, I have neglected you shamefully.

"Our letters crossed each other, and you will

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be wondering why you do not hear something further of my plans and of that little girl.

"Well, old man, the game's up with me now, and I may as well make a clean breast of the whole thing to you.

"Was it fate, Tom, that made me leave home just three weeks too soon? or that made me know Kathleen Nevins before I had seen Eleanore again? If so, it was a hard, cruel fate, for it has ruined my life. Only a few hours before your letter reached me, I offered my heart and hand to Miss Nevins, and—she refused them.

"I think I must have been blind not to see all along what is now so plain to me: that she not only does not care for me, but she does love—another.

"In fact, she is to be married, early in the autumn, to the luckiest man on earth, it seems to me. They are getting her *tromsseau* now. She—bless her sweet, innocent heart—never dreamed that I loved her, and made me promise that we should always be friends.

"Friends, Tom, *friends*, when even now she is all the world to me.

"Then I came to Scotland, and am completely charmed both with our gallant chief and our ancestral home. And bye the by, old chap, I shall want you to be my best man some time in November.

"Aunt Julia and the girls are visiting our uncle, too, and—well, I remembered my father's last request, and Eleanore has forgiven me. Please God, I shall make her happy.

and Other Stories.

“I know my little secret is as safe with you, Tom, as it is with me; and now what I’ve got to do is to burn my ships behind me—all save one; then sail in that, with everything set, into another port, with Eleanore as captain of the craft and I as mate.

“DON.

One Woman's Fate

I, DORIS LANE.

I.

"GRANTLEY GRANGE, May 21, 1891.

"MY DEAREST GIRL," the letter read, "we are giving a dance on my birthday, the twentieth of next month, and I want you to come on the twelfth and stay a fortnight with us. Father and the boys are anxious to know you, and it seems so very long since last I saw you. Let me hear from you at once, and say you will come.

"Lovingly your friend,
"CLARE TREVILLION."

We—father, mother, my sister Anna and I—were seated at breakfast one lovely spring morning, when the first post brought me this note from my boarding school "chum."

"Oh, how jolly," I exclaimed. "Mother, father, listen—" and I read the letter aloud.

"Well, my dear," said father, when I had finished and was looking flushed and expectant from one to the other—"and do you want to go?"

"Do—I—want—to—go?" I repeated—then stopped, for a vision of my present wardrobe

had flashed across my mind. My Sunday gown of dark-brown silk, my old blue serge, two white muslins which had seen better days, but were still dignified by the name of "dinner gowns," and some cotton frocks rather the worse for wear and continual washing did not present a very brilliant array for a visit of a fortnight and a dance. Mother read my thoughts, for she said quickly: "We can easily arrange about some new gowns before then, my daughter, so don't worry about your clothes."

When I realized that I was actually to be allowed to go, I rushed off to answer Clare's invitation most enthusiastically.

An only daughter of a wealthy baronet, Sir Richard Trevillion, and the petted "little sister" of two big teasing brothers, Clare's life was indeed a happy one; but for all the luxury which surrounded her she was much to be pitied, for in her early childhood she had been deprived through death of that most precious of earthly blessings—a mother's love.

My father was vicar of the little town of Steyning, in Sussex, and we lived in a quiet, primitive way, as best suited our means. On the day appointed by Clare, I started on my journey, feeling very important, with a brand new box from town, on which the letters "D. L." appeared in fiery red. The last fortnight had seemed like a dream to me, and I, Doris Lane, had become the proud possessor of "real tailor-made gowns," dainty frocks, new hats, gloves, ribbons, and various trifles which delight the girlish heart.

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Hatherleigh was in Devon, and about four hours by rail from home, but it seemed an incredibly short time before the guard touched me on the shoulder and said respectfully "Best wake up, Miss, we be halmost there." I started up at once, and had only time to smooth back my hair and draw on my gloves, when we stopped at a pretty country station, and the guard returned to help me with my wraps. Another moment and I stood alone on the platform, grasping my umbrella and wishing some one would come.

Just then a voice behind me asked: "Is this Miss Lane?"

I turned quickly, and saw a young man, who raised his hat politely, as I answered: "Yes; and you?" hesitating for an instant.

"Norman Trevillion," he said, with a smile.

"Clare has a cold which keeps her confined to the house, or she would have been here with me. This way, please; Wilson will see to your luggage."

A dog cart stood waiting. "Clare wanted to send the brougham to meet you," said my escort, as he seated himself beside me, and took the reins, "but I insisted that this trap would be pleasanter after your dusty ride. Besides," touching the chestnut lightly with the whip, "I wanted to have the pleasure of driving you myself."

I looked up in surprise.

"Why did he say that," thought I, "when he never saw me before in his life;" but nevertheless, I made a polite acknowledgment of his

favor, then, during the conversation which followed, I stole furtive glances at my new acquaintance. Certainly Captain Trevillion, of Her Majesty's Eleventh Hussars, was an exceedingly handsome man. He was tall and had dark hair brushed back from a broad forehead, a handsome mouth, shaded by a small, well-trimmed mustache, and eyes which revealed more than perhaps he guessed of his real inner self.

At last, as we turned in through a large gate to a long shady avenue of the park, Captain Trevillion said, pointing with his whip to a handsome residence at some distance: "There, Miss Lane, is Grantley Grange; let me be the first to welcome you."

"Thank you. Oh! how lovely it is," I replied, as I looked at the handsome house in admiration.

When we reached the door I saw Clare come running through the hall, and heard her exclaim: "Oh, father, here she is."

She was followed more slowly by a fine-looking old man, with gray hair and beard, and the kindest voice in the world, who said: "And she is very welcome, my dear." Indeed, my reception was as cordial as I could have wished, and after a cup of tea in the morning room, Clare took me up to the pretty bedroom I was to occupy.

"There is only my sitting room between us," she explained. "I thought it would be more fun to be near each other; it's such ages since I have seen you," with a hug. "Beatrice Carle-

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ton is here, too," Clare continued, when I had returned her embrace. "She is a sort of far-off cousin of ours, you know." Then, as a neat, middle-aged woman came to the door, "This is Lawson, Doris," she said; "she has taken care of me since I was a tiny baby, and she will wait on you, too, while you are here. Dinner is at eight, so I shall leave you to take a little rest before you dress," and with a hasty kiss she left the room.

Lawson asked for the key of my portmanteau, then proceeded to unpack the things, while I, in a dainty blue *négligée*, lay on the couch, thinking how pleasant and novel was the sensation of being waited on by a real "lady's maid."

When Clare returned, a few minutes before eight, I was dressed and waiting for her. "How sweet you look, Doris," was her exclamation, as we descended the broad stairs; "I never saw you look so well before."

I laughed, and slipped my hand lovingly through her arm. I felt pleased with my appearance, for the simple white silk gown, with its low-cut bodice and huge puff sleeves, was certainly vastly becoming. As we entered the drawing-room by one door, a girl came slowly in by another, followed by a young man.

"Do behave, Cecil," she was saying, laughingly, as they entered, and as she stood for an instant under the brilliantly lighted chandelier, while Clare introduced us, I thought Miss Carleton simply lovely. She was tall and graceful; dark hair, worn in a loose knot at the

back of a queenly little head, and lying in little curls upon the white forehead, framed a face of exquisite beauty. Her chief charm, however, was in her eyes, which were dark, and had in them a soft dreaminess that completely fascinated me.

Miss Carleton held out her hand. "I am so glad to meet you, Miss Lane," she said.

Clare presented the young man to me, as "my younger brother, Cecil." Sir Richard took me in to dinner that night, and on my other side sat Captain Trevillion, who, with his brother, kept up a lively conversation until Clare gave us the signal to leave the table. The evening seemed very short, and passed very pleasantly. At Clare's request I sang several songs, when Captain Trevillion, who had been standing by the piano, urged me to stop, saying that otherwise I would not rest well after my tedious journey. "But some other time you will let me hear you again, won't you?" he asked, as he held the door open for me to pass.

"If you like," I answered.

A week passed all too rapidly, for Sir Richard and his family were untiring in their efforts to entertain their guests.

The twentieth arrived at length, and was a bright, lovely day. The afternoon train brought a number of guests from town for the dance, and I was more excited than I cared to confess. All day I had been somewhat embarrassed by Captain Trevillion's attentions. At home no one had ever been so kind to me, or so careful of my comfort, and somehow I never lifted my

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eyes when he was near me without meeting his gaze. Once, I remember, I blushed vividly at the encounter, whereupon he quickly turned away. I could not account for the sudden quickening of my pulses whenever he addressed me, or the gladness I felt when he entered the room. "What is it?" I asked myself, but found no answer to my question.

As I stood before the white and gold cheval glass in my room that evening, when Lawson's skillful fingers had made me look my best, and Lawson had pronounced me "Just beautiful, Miss," it occurred to me for the first time that I really was quite pretty. My ball gown of white tulle was daintily embroidered with pink rosebuds; the *décolleté* bodice trimmed with a spray of the same delicate blossoms. A tiny wreath in my hair, held in place by mother's last gift to me—a little star of pearls—long white gloves, and pretty satin slippers, with my first "Louis" heels, completed my toilette. Masses of golden hair crowning a small, shapely head, well-poised upon a full round throat, and shoulders of marble white, great blue eyes, still childishly innocent, shaded by long, curling lashes a nose slightly retrousse; a mouth a trifle too large, perhaps, for beauty, but the better revealing two rows of even, white teeth, and a dimple in either cheek, was what I saw reflected in the glass. I drew on one long glove with a happy sigh, and wished with all my heart that the dear ones at home could see me.

At that moment Lawson returned, and handing me a beautiful bouquet of pink roses, said:

and Other Stories.

“With Captain Trevillion’s compliments, Miss, oh, Miss, they do look just lovely with your gown!”

“How very kind of him,” I murmured, burying my face in the flowers, to hide from the maid’s scrutiny the flush which had arisen, unbidden, to my cheeks.

When I entered the ballroom several of the guests had already arrived, but the dancing had not yet begun. Clare, looking bewitchingly pretty in a simple frock of light blue and silver, was talking, as I entered, to a tall, good-looking man, whom she presented to me, with a charming blush, as “Mr. Westinghouse.” Miss Carleton, evidently much to Cecil’s discomfort, was laughing and chatting gayly to a crowd of surrounding admirers, and looking lovely in an exquisite gown of pale green and gold. Captain Trevillion, who had been standing near her, crossed the room to where I stood with Clare.

“May I have the first dance, Miss Lane?” he asked, taking the card I held.

I assented, and he added, laughing: “Ah! I am going to take advantage of this chance while I can. A little later you won’t have a dance to spare.”

When he returned my card, I saw that the initials “N. G. T.” were four times inscribed thereon.

“How awfully well that frock suits you,” he said, after a moment’s pause, “and how good of you to carry my flowers.”

“It was so very kind of you to think of me.”

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"Kind to think of you?" he repeated, interrupting me, and looking steadily at me. "Why, child, if you could only guess how often I—" he broke off suddenly, and offered me his arm.

My card was soon filled, and when the opening bars of music were played, Captain Trevillion and I were the first couple on the floor. It was a waltz, and I had never before danced with any one whose step suited mine so well. Neither of us spoke. I knew that I was too near heaven to converse on the commonplace things of earth.

The fourth dance was a quadrille, and belonged to Captain Trevillion. Not caring to dance we went into the little conservatory adjoining the ballroom. We talked very little. I felt strangely confused, and leaned back on the divan, not trying to entertain my companion, while Captain Trevillion, after several attempts at conversation, sat idly opening and shutting my white fan.

Cecil, sauntering through the shrubbery, which half filled the conservatory, came upon us unawares. "Tired, little girl?" he asked, in a pleasantly familiar tone, which he often used to me now. We were fast friends, Cecil and I, already calling each other by our Christian names. "Not very, dear old boy," I answered gayly, catching his tone. A shade of annoyance passed over Captain Trevillion's face, as Cecil seated himself beside me.

"By Jove, Norman," Cecil exclaimed, "I believe you were half asleep when I came up, and Doris looked bored to death. "Here," tak-

ing my fan from his brother's hand, "my dance comes next, so you may as well leave her with me now, like a good chap."

Without a word Captain Trevillion rose and giving me a most dignified bow walked slowly into the ballroom.

"Oh, Cecil, how horrid of you!" I cried. "Now you have offended him!" Cecil looked amused. "Oh, no, I haven't; he's always off in the clouds and wants some one to bring him back to earth. Jove! Miss Allison can do it;" and in answer to my look of inquiry he exclaimed: "Miss Allison—she's his *fiancée*, you know. Stunning girl from America—lives in New York, I think—heaps of money—old man in some railroad there. She's a beauty, if you like—lots of 'go' and all that, you know; and they're awfully broken up on each other. Gad! you should see her ride; but, I say, what's the matter with you? You look ghastly. Have a glass of water—an ice?"

"It's only the heat," I said, fighting off the faintness fast creeping over me. "Yes, do get me an ice."

Left alone, I buried my face in my hands, and Cecil's words came back to me, as I rocked myself to and fro on the cushioned divan. "His—*fiancée*," I whispered, "and—he—loves—her—she—will—be—his—wife." I shuddered at the thought, but told myself I did not care. Ah! why, then, did the sobs rise in my throat, and my heart suddenly seem turned to stone? Hearing footsteps approaching, and not wanting to see Cecil again until I could control

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my emotions, I caught up a wrap lying near, and hurried out on the terrace, the footsteps still in pursuit. Almost blinded by my tears, and fearing to be found by my next partner, I began to run, when catching my heel in a ruffle, as I started down the steps, I fell to the ground. I struggled to my feet, but a cry burst from my lips as a twinge of agony made it evident to me that I had twisted my ankle; and again the faintness nearly overpowered me. Very indistinctly I heard the footsteps now close behind me, then a low exclamation, and, as I swayed slightly backward, some one caught me tenderly in his arms and I knew no more.

II.

SLOWLY I regained consciousness and opened my eyes, only to close them again with a happy feeling of content, for I was lying in Norman's arms, and heard him whisper passionately:

"Doris, my love, my darling! Speak to me. Open those sweet eyes and let me tell you how I love you!"

And, I remembering only that I was with him, murmured: "Norman—dearest!" while his kisses fell fast on my face.

Then, in the midst of my new-found happiness, with his arms still around me, and his voice calling me by all the endearing terms of love—suddenly those other words—Cecil's—came to my mind, crushing all my joy; for,

even though I knew he belonged to another, I loved him—I, Doris Lane!”

“How can you! Oh, how dare you!” I cried, trying to break from his encircling arms; but he held me fast.

“How dare I love you?” he asked laughingly. “Ah, little one, I scarcely know myself, how I dared hope for your love in return. But who could know you, dear, and not love you? Why, Doris, what is it? Are you in pain—are you hurt?” for without a moment’s warning I had burst into tears, and was pushing him from me with all my small strength.

“Oh, my ankle!” I moaned miserably, and quietly lifting me from the ground, Norman carried me into the house. At the door we met Cecil, who was evidently still searching for me.

“Miss Lane has hurt her foot,” said Captain Trevillion quickly. “Find Clare and send her here.”

Then he turned into the library, laid me gently on the sofa and took my hand in his.

“Poor little girl!” he said softly, “how did it happen? Was it from Cecil that you were running when you fell?” and I had never heard him speak so sharply before.

“Oh, indeed, no!” I began hastily. But just then Clare entered the room, followed by Cecil.

“Oh, Doris, what is it?” exclaimed Clare. “What has happened?”

Cecil, who knew I would not care to be questioned just then, interrupted her. “She has sprained her ankle, I should imagine, and the best place for her is in her room, where she can

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be made more comfortable," he said shortly, then raised me carefully from the sofa. I saw Captain Trevillion grow white to the very lips and he made a half-gesture as if to take me from Cecil, but as I slipped one arm around Cecil's neck when he said 'Hold on to me, Doris—you'll feel steadier,' Norman drew back and I heard him order that one of the grooms should be sent at once for the doctor.

"I'm awfully sorry, Doris," whispered Cecil, as he ascended the stairs. "Where in the world did you go to when I left you to go for that ice?"

"I felt so faint," I answered, "that I went out on the terrace to get some air, and quite forgot those steps." Then, seeing a questioning look in his eyes, I added: "Your brother must have been quite near, for he was there when I recovered consciousness."

The doctor arrived very soon, and found me comfortably arranged on the couch, with Lawson to watch over me. I had persuaded Clare to return to her guests. He pronounced my sprain a severe one, and no amount of persuasion on my part would induce him to say that I could return home on the next day but one, as I had intended doing.

"Quite impossible, my dear young lady," he said, as he drew on his gloves; "that ankle requires close attention for the next ten days, and traveling sooner than a fortnight is out of the question."

For two days I was not permitted to leave my room, and was very much petted by Clare,

who was most charming in her new rôle of nurse. Each morning I received a lovely bouquet from Captain Trevillion, and Cecil afterward informed me that he had "risked his complexion" to pick certain choice peaches for me himself.

The third day the doctor finally yielded to my entreaties, and allowed my couch to be wheeled into Clare's sitting room, where I found the entire household assembled to do me honor. Captain Trevillion had come directly to me, and while bending over me, apparently to readjust one of my cushions, he whispered, "My darling," very low. I gave the cushion an angry jerk, and turned my head away from him, although my heart was beating wildly at his words. With a look of surprise he turned aside and entered into a discussion in which Sir Richard and Mr. Westinghouse were engaged. Presently tea was brought in, and general conversation followed, till finally Mr. Westinghouse, who had been sitting a little apart with Clare, whispered a few words to her. With a blush she nodded "Yes," and together they left the room. A few moments later I saw them driving in the dog cart up the avenue through the park. Cecil, who had been talking in a low tone to Miss Carleton not far from my couch, pulled his chair still nearer to me, and began, suddenly: "Oh, I say, Doris—" then stopped and looked at Miss Carleton, who, to my amazement, was blushing furiously. "We have something to tell you, Beatrice and I," he continued. "Can you guess what it is?"

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"Really, Cecil," I exclaimed, sitting up in my excitement; "has Miss Carleton really——"

"You must call me Beatrice, too," said Miss Carleton, rising and coming over to join Cecil beside me. She added: "We shall be very good friends, I am sure."

"Well, I think Cecil is to be congratulated," said I warmly.

"I am the one, rather," she corrected, sweetly, and bending her lovely head she kissed me. To my surprise, Cecil followed her example, then ran out of the room with Beatrice in hot pursuit. Sir Richard was called away in a few minutes, and I was left alone with Captain Trevillion.

He had been gazing absently out of the window, but as the door closed after his father, he hurried to my side. "At last, my love, they have left you to me. Doris, you know how I love you," he continued, before I could speak, "and I want you to be my wife. Will you wear this, dearest?" slipping an exquisite half hoop of diamonds on my finger. "I could not wait any longer to get it, so ran up to town yesterday when the house was so desperately dull without you. Little one, say those dear words to me again—the sweetest words that ever gave man hope—say: 'Norman, my dearest, I love you,' and I shall be content. Why, dear heart, what is it? Don't you like it?" in a disappointed tone, for his ring had fallen from my finger to the floor, and I had buried my face in my hands.

"No, no! Not that. It is beautiful," I

stammered incoherently, trying to control my voice.

"But you do love me, dear? Surely you love me," he repeated. As I did not reply, he asked in a pained tone: "Doris, won't you trust me? Why do you treat me so?"

Summoning all my wounded pride then, I started up, exclaiming indignantly: "Captain Trevillion, can't you understand? Am I so weak, so childish, do you think, that I will allow a man to make love to me as a mere pastime? Were you free, it would be different, and I might, perhaps, listen to you; but—wait, please," as he was about to speak—"I know all. Was it manly or generous of you to take advantage of words spoken almost unconsciously?" I blushed as I recalled them. "Oh, it was cowardly, it was unjust. Unjust to yourself, to me, and"—a slight pause—"to Miss Allison. Ah, you see they have told me," for I saw a quick contraction of the brows, and he made a hasty gesture with his hand. "Could she but know—" Something in his face made me stop abruptly, and I fell back among my pillows.

"We will leave Miss Allison's name out, if you please," he said sternly.

I knew then that I had gone too far.

"So they have told you that?" he went on, as he slowly paced the room; "and you think me dishonorable enough to ask one girl to marry me when I am already the accepted lover of another? How meanly you must think of me," bitterly, "and yet"—with a short, unnatural

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laugh—"after all, I am not so black as you paint me. But I am tiring you," as I closed my eyes wearily. "I shall not attempt an explanation; good-by, Miss Lane."

The next moment I was alone, and my pent-up emotions at last giving way, I cried as if my heart would break. "Oh, Norman, my darling," I sobbed, "if you only knew how I love you! if you only knew!"

That evening, when Clare came to bid me good-night, she looked very grave and quite unlike her usual gay self.

"Is anything the matter, Clare?" I asked, a sudden fear creeping over me.

"Oh, Doris!" she replied, "Norman has just told father that he leaves to-morrow for town, and expects to join his regiment in Egypt next week. Something has happened, I know, for it was all arranged that he was to go to America. You know, of course, that he is engaged to Emily Allison?"

"Cecil told me," I answered faintly, and Clare continued:

"They expect to be married in October, and go direct to Cairo, but perhaps Norman has changed his plans and intends having another furlough, so as to travel in America on their honeymoon. Yes, that must be it," then with a good-night kiss she went into her room.

I sat for some time in the moonlight, looking out into the night, then, all at once, I saw some one come out of the house and walk slowly to and fro on the terrace. It was Norman, his arms folded, his head bent slightly, and lost in

thought. As I leaned a little forward, the better to see him, he turned suddenly in his walk and looked up. I drew back, but not before I saw him raise his hat quickly and the moon rays fell full upon his face as our eyes met for an instant.

Next morning, when I heard that he had gone, all the light and joy faded for a time from my life, and I longed for solitude.

Ten days later, I returned home with a heavy heart, and it seemed as though years had elapsed since my departure.

III.

THE summer passed slowly and quite uneventfully to us. Clare had written me of her engagement to Mr. Westinghouse, and was very happy in her love.

"You must be one of my bridesmaids," she wrote. "Jack sends his love—very improper, I tell him—and says *it* is to be some time in October, but I think that will be entirely too soon." Underneath the letter was written in a clear, manly hand: "It is to be in October, surely, Miss Lane, and we count on you to assist in the ceremony, which will make me the happiest of men."

"My sister Anna and my father's curate, Mr. Brooks, were married very quietly one September morning, and went to live in the tiny home we had taken such pleasure in arranging for them.

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Mr. Brooke's younger brother had been spending the last two months before his marriage with him, and as we had been thrown continually in each other's society, a warm friendship between us was the result. I had hoped to have it always so, but on the evening of the wedding day, as we walked slowly around the gardens together, Felix Brooke told me of his love.

"Doris," he began suddenly, in a tone which was strange for him, "I am going away to-morrow, you know—but I can't leave you without telling you how I have grown to love you; how necessary you are to my happiness. I know I'm not half good enough for you, dear, but won't you try and care for me, just a little?"

"Oh, don't, Felix, don't say any more," I whispered tearfully. "I do care for you very much as a dear friend, but not in that way; oh! not in that way at all!"

"Won't you give me some hope?" he asked eagerly. "I might go away, and perhaps, in time——"

"No, no," I interrupted hastily; "do not think it. It is quite, quite impossible."

"Is there some one else?" he demanded, almost fiercely; then added more gently, "but I have no right to ask you that. Oh, Doris, I have loved you so, and would have tried so hard to have made you happy."

After breakfast the next morning he went away, apparently the brightest and gayest of men, but when he came to take leave of me

every trace of color faded from his face, and he whispered:

“Doris—darling—good-by.”

“Dear fellow,” I thought, as I stood in the doorway looking after him. “I almost wish it had been my fate to make him happy.”

IV.

LATE in September the doctor prescribed a change of air for mother, and advised me to accompany her. We went for a month to the south of France, where, some time after, we were joined by Sir Richard Trevillion and Clare.

“Our last little journey together,” the old gentleman had told us, “before that fellow, Jack, takes possession of my property.”

It had been arranged to have a double wedding in November, Cecil being of one mind with Mr. Westinghouse that “long engagements were a deuced bore —*et à quoi bon?*”

One morning, as we sat watching the people on the beach, Clare suddenly jumped up, exclaiming: “Why, father, look! Here is Miss Allison, coming this way. What do you suppose brought her here?”

For an instant my heart stood still. At last I was to see the girl, who, all unconsciously, had robbed me of one dearer than life.

“Why, bless my soul, so it is!” I heard Sir Richard say; and his voice sounded far away to me; “but that is not her father with her.”

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"Oh, he must be somewhere around," answered Clare vaguely, and ran to meet Miss Allison, who was evidently much surprised and returned her embrace warmly. We were near enough to hear an astonished exclamation from Clare, and to see Miss Allison blush very prettily, as she presented her companion, a young man of about thirty—then she hastened to speak to Sir Richard. After inquiring for her parents, Sir Richard turned to us, and presented "Miss Allison." Again the charming blush, which I was attributing to the unexpected meeting with the father and sister of her betrothed, when she said gently, but with evident pride: "No, Sir Richard, not Miss Allison now. Donald"—to the young man standing beside her—"this is Sir Richard Trevillion, of whom you have often heard us speak. Sir Richard, permit me to present my husband—Mr. MacLane."

For a moment I thought I should faint; then recovered myself sufficiently to acknowledge Mr. MacLane's polite bow. Could it be possible that this was another Miss Allison? But no, for, later, I heard Clare ask: "Father, why did she not marry Norman? When was their engagement broken off?"

Sir Richard looked grave and answered slowly: "My child, that engagement should never have been. It was infatuation more than love in their case, and, when on shipboard returning home, Miss Allison met and loved Mr. MacLane, she wrote at once to Norman asking for her release."

I caught hold of mother's arm for support

and Other Stories.

and walked on with fast beating heart, for I realized that he was free and that I had wronged him. It was for me to make amends.

I listened eagerly as Sir Richard continued: "Norman showed me the letter the evening before he left last June. He told me that he knew now it had been all for the best, and asked me not to mention it until his return. It all had to come out now."

"Poor, dear old boy," sighed Clare, "and when Cecil and I are so happy, too.

"Perhaps Norman is not altogether so unhappy as you might imagine, my dear," said her father smiling—and was it mere fancy—did he glance at me as he spoke? I hope not, for my face flushed hotly at his words.

The remainder of our visit passed very quickly. We parted from the Trevillions at Dover, but not before Sir Richard had persuaded mother and father—for father had joined us then—to be his guests on the day fixed for the weddings.

In spite of the pleasure I was anticipating from my visit the thought of how different everything would seem often made me very wretched. How I should miss Norman and all his loving attentions to me.

Once more I arrived at Hatherleigh, but this time it was Cecil who met us at the station.

"The amount of time and thought those girls have spent on what they call their 'trousseaux' is simply shameful," he explained as we drove along. "But I say, Doris, what a pity you didn't encourage that nice chap, Ferrars, when

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you were here before. He's here now—come on to see Westinghouse through to-morrow. You know, of course, my best man is—” the carriage stopping in front of the door interrupted him, and Sir Richard, Clare and Beatrice stood waiting to welcome us.

We found Mr. Ferrars and Mr. Westinghouse in the drawing room and after much excitement and many congratulations I was hurried upstairs by the brides-elect to have a peep at the wedding gowns. Having admired everything to their satisfaction, I dressed hurriedly for dinner, in order to have time to revisit some of the places made dear to me by past associations. In the music room I found Mr. Ferrars, picking out an accompaniment on the piano.

“Oh, Miss Lane,” he exclaimed, as I stood in the doorway, “won't you play this over for me? It is one you sing, and I can't quite manage it.”

I consented, and as soon as he had finished singing, the dressing-bell sounded, so that he left the room.

I remained sitting at the piano, my fingers wandering idly over the keys. A pile of music lay beside me, and I absently picked up the top piece. It was an old favorite of mine, and one that I had sung very often for Norman in the old days. My lips trembled a little now, as I whispered the song:

“The ways of Life are often clouded sadly,
And where the roses grow oft thorns appear!
Altho' the heart has loved and trusted madly,
The parting hour, alas! so soon is near!

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I read of love in thy sweet glances, dreaming,
They told of love and happiness for me!
Alas! my heart! 'twas naught but lovely seeming.
Alas! my heart! it was not thus to be!

“Wrong, grief, and hate were mine, and weary sadness;
A wanderer I, upon Life's stormy wave!
I dreamt of peace and quiet hours of gladness;
My faith in thee such hope and promise gave!
Then joy was mine, beyond all mortal dreaming,
My soul I gave in youthful hope to thee!
Alas! my heart! 'twas naught but idle seeming.
Alas! my heart! it was not thus to be!”

The last words came sobbingly. When it was ended, fond memories of the past overwhelmed me. I covered my face with my hands and repeated again and again the name of him who was all the world to me, while the tears fell hot and fast.

Out of the shadow of the doorway came an unnoticed figure. Suddenly two strong arms stole round me, while the voice I had so longed to hear, whispered tenderly: “Doris—my little love. Forgive me—I could not stay away.” It was so unexpected that it is no wonder I felt dazed and could scarcely realize the meaning of the great happiness in my heart.

“Oh, dearest,” I murmured, at length, “can you ever forgive me? My doubt, my——”

“Hush, sweetheart,” he interrupted gently. “We were both wrong; but”—pressing me closer to him, as if to take the reproach from his words—“you *might* have trusted me.”

Four years have passed since I received Clare's first invitation to Grantley Grange.

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My husband is Sir Norman now, and I am Lady Trevillion.

A few months after our marriage God took Sir Richard from us—the only sorrow we have had in our wedded life.

Only yesterday, as I sat before the fire in my dainty *boudoir*, adding these last few lines to my little tale of love, Norman came in and sat down beside me.

“What is that, dear?” he asked.

I answered laughingly: “Lots of nice things about you, sir, even from the day you first met me at the station; you remember?”

“So well,” he said, slipping his arm around me. “The happiest day of all to me. Do you know why? No?” —as I shook my head with a blush.

“Well, because I knew from the moment I saw you that you would be the love of my life.”

HER STORY.

FAR over on the western horizon of beautiful Dering harbor the sun is sinking slowly to rest.

A gentle hush has fallen on the water, and only the faint, caressing strains of a zither float upon the evening air, as the "Ave Maria," sweet as the breath of angel in heaven, breaks its stillness.

The last note lingers, then dies sadly away, and, as if sounding its death-knell, the sunset gun booms from the shore.

A girl reclining among the cushions on the deck of a large cutter at anchor sits suddenly erect, and pushes back some rebellious little curls from her low, white forehead.

"I love that so," she exclaims, in a voice that is not quite steady, lifting a pair of moist, dark eyes to meet those of a young man, who has thrown himself upon the deck beside her, and is watching her intently; "you don't know, Douglas, how I love it."

"But I do know that I love you," he answers gently, taking one soft brown hand, and holding it captive between both his own, "better than all the world—than life itself. You know it, don't you, darling? Dulcie, tell me that you will be my wife."

The girl's eyes wander restlessly from one to

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another of the twinkling harbor lights during the moment's pause which follows, then:

"There is something I shall have to tell you," she begins brokenly. "I honor and respect you more than any man I have ever known, Douglas—yes, and I love you, too—but mine is not the love that you deserve, dear—it isn't, indeed; that love—I gave—to some one else. Listen: I will tell you now, while the others are ashore, what you alone have the right to know of my past life."

She draws her hand slowly from his, and lets it fall with the other in her lap; then, with her eyes fixed on the still, blue water, begins:

"We were traveling in Europe, mamma, auntie and I, for nearly a year. Early in April we arrived in Paris, and it was on Easter Sunday at the Pontifical Mass at Notre Dame, that I for the first time heard that 'Ave Maria,' and saw Eric Griswold. The music was stirring my inmost soul, and heaven seemed very near and real to me, when gradually I became aware that some one had taken the vacant chair beside me, and was watching me intently. I turned my face toward him, and our eyes met for an instant. Something in his made my heart beat furiously, and I bent lower over the prayer book in which I was following the service. A few moments later we left the cathedral, and as I was stepping into our *fiacre*, a voice which somehow I knew must be his, said, close behind me, with a strong English accent: 'I beg pardon, did you drop these?' I turned and saw him standing before me with his hat

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in one hand, and a bunch of half-faded violets in the other. I felt the hot blood rush to my cheek, and my would-be hauteur was deplorable. 'They are not mine,' I answered. He bowed, and smiling at me with those wonderful eyes of his, he turned away."

Something very like a smile shines in the girl's own eyes, as she pauses to live over, in memory, the incident; but there is something else there, too, that makes Kent say, softly: "Yes, dear, and then?"

"Oh, then we drove back to the hotel, and the next day I met him. He dined at our *table d'hôte* with a mutual friend, and she presented him. After that I saw him every day—two, three times a day usually, and he went everywhere with us. In June, just before we left Paris, he was called suddenly home; his only sister was dying. How I missed him! A fortnight later he rejoined us at Vichy and then—then I comforted him. How sweet it is to comfort those one loves."

Here a little hand steals out in the starlight, and creeps gently into a larger one close by.

"At Hamburg our engagement was announced to a few intimate friends only, on account of his recent bereavement, and we were, oh, so happy. Returning to England we visited his people. His father was a wealthy baronet, and until the death of their daughter they had had everything in the world to give them happiness; everything but——"

She breaks off abruptly. Eight bells ring out clearly from a yacht anchored alongside, and

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are echoed almost instantly by others in the harbor.

"His mother told me," Dulcie goes on presently. "We had been there only two days when she told me. Oh, it was awful. I shall never forget how I felt when she pronounced those terrible words; my heart seemed to die within me, but nothing mattered then, and I sat there for hours, I think, and listened.

"I can see it all now, the great, cold-looking room, which never could seem homelike, the magnificent bronzes and marbles, the high, straight-backed chairs, like the one in which I was sitting, the piano where only a few hours before I had sat and played for him alone—all the old sweet airs he loved; I saw them each one in turn as I listened.

"How I reached my room I do not know, and when I had locked the door I walked quite mechanically to the window and stood there staring vacantly out into the deepening twilight. The dressing-bell rang. I neither heeded it nor stirred. The maid came to help me dress, but I called out to her that she was to make my excuses to her ladyship; I had a severe headache and would retire. Mamma came to the door later on, I remember, but I feigned sleep and did not respond when she knocked gently and called me by name, so she went on downstairs.

"I threw myself on the bed then, and lay there, motionless, till early dawn, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, save those pitiful words, wrung from a mother's agonized heart: 'Upon

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my children has fallen the curse of insanity; my daughter died in a fit of madness, and Eric, I have reason to fear, will not escape.'

"I found myself whispering it over and over half-aloud:

"Eric will not escape. Eric, my Eric, my dear, dear love."

"Presently, with another thought, I grew calm and cold. He would have led me on—on until it was too late; till, some day I perhaps might have suffered as that dear woman suffered, when obliged to tell some sweet, confiding girl that another Eric 'would not escape.'

"Douglas, even then I loved him, but I knew I could never be his wife.

"I told him so, next morning, without betraying his mother's confidence, and for the first and only time I saw in his eyes a look which only the curse could have brought there. Holding me tightly in his arms, he vowed to kill the one who would dare take me from him. I was becoming thoroughly frightened when suddenly he released me and fell senseless at my feet. Screaming loudly for help, I tried to raise him from the floor and carry him to the couch at the further end of the room, but my strength failed me, and I could only sit there holding his dear head in my lap and kissing his pale face, until help came. They moved him carefully and laid him on the bed in his own room, where presently he returned to consciousness and asked for me. I went to him and stayed till—till the end. They had been expecting just such an attack in a moment of great excite-

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ment, the physician assured me, and that was why she, Lady Griswold, had told me all.

"We stayed till after the funeral, and then a week later we sailed for home.

"I never thought of loving any other man—until—I met you, and—that's all."

"Dear heart," Kent murmurs, when she had finished, drawing her into the shelter of his strong, loving arms: "My poor little sweetheart! But now, Dulcie, you will trust me and love me just a little, won't you, dear?"

"I do love you, and if after all you have heard," she raises her head and looks steadily at him for an instant, then: "Oh, my dear," she says with a little sob, pressing her warm cheek to his, "after all I have told you, are you sure, *sure* that you want me? Do you still love me?"

"With all my heart," Kent answers.

AFTER THE BALL.

“THERE! Now go, Katherine, I shall not need you any more to-night.”

“Yes, miss,” answered the maid, and only stopping to push an armchair nearer the blazing fire, she left the room.

Ellean Talcott stood some moments before the dainty dressing-table, a little happy smile parting her lips, and “her thoughts on sweet memories bent.” Suddenly she gave a start, as her eyes fell upon a photograph on a table beside her. The likeness was that of a man of perhaps twenty-six, tall, handsome, and of dignified, soldierly bearing. The rather haughty expression of the eyes seemed to soften as Ellean gazed intently at the pictured face, and with a sigh pressed her lips gently to those which in life were never unresponsive to her caresses.

“Poor Jack! He loves me so. How glad I am that he is not here now. It will be easier to write than to tell him that—that after all I cannot be his wife, for I do not love him as I thought, or as I hoped I should.”

Mechanically replacing the picture, she seated herself at her writing-table, and selecting a sheet of delicately monogrammed paper, began to write. For a few moments the faint scratching of a pen was heard. She wrote quickly at

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first; then more slowly, and with evident difficulty, and finally the pen dropped from her hand; she covered her face and whispered brokenly, while tears stole through the parted fingers: "How can I hurt him so? How can I be so cruel? Oh, Guy, Guy, why did you come between us? Why will you make me break his heart, for he loves me as you do, dear. But I cannot give you up, Guy—no, not even for him."

The French clock on the mantel chimed out four, when Ellean at last roused herself from the reverie into which she had fallen, and throwing herself upon the bed, fell into a dreamless sleep.

When Ellean entered the breakfast room a guilty flush stole over her cheeks as she saw a letter, addressed in a well-known handwriting lying at her plate. She dropped it carelessly into her lap, and asked for cutlets and toast, but the unusual action was not unobserved.

"My dear," said her mother in gentle surprise, "I thought your letter was from Jack. Is it not?"

"Yes, mamma, but it must wait. I am too hungry to think of letters till after breakfast."

A questioning glance passed between her father and mother, and Ellean saw it.

"What will they say?" she thought, with fast beating heart. "They care so much for Jack; he has always been like a son to them both."

"Ellean, here are cards for Lady Winston's ball in a fortnight. We shall go, I think; and my dear, wear something white, it suits you best," said Mrs. Talcott.

No one noticed the swift blush on Ellean's face. Lady Winston was the aunt of Sir Guy Hartley, and it would well please Miss Talcott to look her loveliest at this ball. She sought her own room, and drew Jack's letter from her pocket. He was her cousin, and had fallen ill with typhoid fever some six months ago, only a few weeks after their engagement had been announced. For days his life hung in the balance, but good nursing, and his own great desire to live, had gained the mastery over death, and he slowly recovered. It was now over four months since the doctor had sent him off on a long sea voyage, and he was getting restless for home comforts—and Ellean. Ellean's heart was very heavy as she read his words of love and longing.

"I am so much better, darling," he wrote, in conclusion. "The sea breezes seem to have quite set me up again, and your dear letters are such a comfort. But I miss you, sweetheart, and am longing for the time when I can hold you close in my arms and hear you tell me again that you love me."

The unfinished letter of the previous night lay where she had left it. She caught it up hastily, tore it into many pieces, and watched them burn to ashes.

"I cannot send that," she said, half aloud. "I must wait, and when he comes home, I must tell him. Until then I will be true, and Guy must be patient and help me to do my duty."

The Dowager Lady Winston's magnificent

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drawing rooms were ablaze with light and crowded with the *élite* of London, and Lady Winston's face wreathed in smiles as the portly butler announced:

"The Honorable Mrs. Talcott and Miss Talcott."

"So good of you, dear," murmured the stately dowager, pressing Ellean's hand warmly. "And looking more charming than ever. Ah! here comes a friend of yours. First in the field, as usual. Guy, see that this child enjoys herself to-night."

"You may trust me to do my best, auntie," he answered, smiling. "Miss Talcott, will you give me this waltz?" Many eyes watched them as they danced. Girls who would have given everything to be favored by Sir Guy Hartley, the biggest fish in the matrimonial market at present, and men who were anxious to secure at least one dance from the proud Miss Talcott, the acknowledged belle of the season.

All unconscious of scrutiny, these two, after a few rounds of the ballroom, found a delightfully arranged spot for a *tête-à-tête* and Sir Guy feasted his eyes upon the girl's beauty as he asked:

"May I have my answer now, dear? I have been so patient, and did not even ask your reason for keeping me miserable a whole fortnight. Ellean, let me tell your father to-morrow that I love you—that we love each other. May I?"

"Sir Guy," Ellean began, a pallor born of her resolve creeping into her face, "Sir Guy, I cannot do as you wish; at least not yet," she

added, for he had started up and stood looking down at her, his face as pale as her own.

"I thought you knew it all along," Ellean continued, "until you told me you loved me, and asked me to be your wife. Then," and her voice trembled a little, "then I was not brave enough to tell you, but now I must. I am engaged to be married to my cousin, Jack Stafford."

"Ellean! My God!"

"We were children together, Jack and I, and have always been very dear to each other," the girl went on, "and so, when he asked me to marry him I thought I loved him; I did, truly, Guy, and then—you came."

He caught her gloved hand in his and kissed it passionately.

"Ellean, you shall be mine! I love you too well to give you up! You are my ideal of all that is sweet and lovely in woman. You will tell him, darling, that you were mistaken; that your cousinly affection for him is not the love of a wife for her husband, and if he is the man I think him, he will release you from your promise; you will do this, dear, for my sake?"

"I did try to write, Guy," she answered, "for I knew you would come soon for your answer, but somehow the words sounded so cruel I knew not what to say. Then this morning his letter came, such a happy letter, that I just couldn't send mine, dear—not even for you!"

There was a pause, then footsteps drew near, and a man's voice was heard inquiring: "Have

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you seen Miss Talcott, Bob? Her mother wants her directly, and I can't find her."

After that, silence once more.

"Try again to write, Ellean," pleaded Sir Guy, as they went into the ballroom in answer to Mrs. Talcott's summons. Promise me that you will?"

"I will try, Guy," she answered, gently lifting her eyes to meet his, and with a sad little smile, "to-night—after the ball."

"My dear," Mrs. Talcott said, when they reached her, "I'm sorry, but we must go home at once. Your father has sent for us. He must be ill—or called away unexpectedly. Sir Guy, may I trouble you to order our carriage?"

"Allow me to accompany you home, Mrs. Talcott," Sir Guy said. "I might, perhaps, be of some assistance in case of illness."

"Oh, Sir Guy, how very good of you. But to miss the ball—" began Mrs. Talcott.

"The ball will have no charms for me—now," he uttered the last word so softly that only Ellean heard it, as he bent over to fasten the obstinate clasp of her cloak.

Mr. Talcott himself met them at the hall door.

"Edward, what has happened?" and "Papa, you are not ill?" exclaimed Mrs. Talcott and Ellean at sight of him.

"I'm all right," answered Mr. Talcott soothingly. "Ah, Sir Guy, so good of you. Come in, come in. I hated to send for you, but when that poor boy—" He broke off suddenly and dashed away a tear, unseen by the others.

They entered the drawing room, and were removing their wraps, when he turned to his wife and said in a low tone, handing her a bit of blue paper: "Read it, Laura; how shall we break it to our poor darling?"

"Papa! What is it?" cried Ellean, for she had caught the last words.

"There, there, my child. Be calm, be brave." For Ellean had turned deathly white, and was trembling with emotion.

"Jack!" she gasped, "not Jack?"

Her mother came close beside her. "Read it, dear; it is better that you should know the truth."

"Our client, Mr. John Stafford, died this morning of heart failure. Have written particulars.

"THOMAS & CAMPBELL,
"Counsellors-at-Law."

The paper dropped from the girl's nerveless fingers, and her eyes wandered vacantly from her mother, who was weeping silently, to her father, dreading the anguish of her grief. Then slowly, deliberately she turned them to where Sir Guy stood alone.

"Dead!" she whispered brokenly. "Jack is dead. Oh, Jack, dear, you said if my love for you died, you would die with it. But you never knew, Jack, you never knew that I— Ah, Guy!"

She threw out her hands toward him, staggered a little forward and fell senseless into the arms outstretched to receive her.

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PAUL DE MARCEAU.

A TRUE STORY.

IN a well-known town of Connecticut there was, some years ago, an institution generally advertised as "Miss Blank's Select Seminary for Young Ladies."

Among the boarders entered for a certain school year was one whom we shall call Frances Ray, a girl possessed of more than the ordinary amount of good looks and common sense, and gifted with a rare charm of manner. She was Miss Blank's favorite pupil; for had not Miss Blank known her from her earliest infancy, when the little motherless baby had been brought to her aunt, Mrs. James Barber, of Gramercy Park, New York, and was not Miss Blank that aunt's "very dearest friend?" Yes, Frances Ray was undoubtedly clever; no girl in her class could equal her in science, in mathematics, or even in history. Yet there was one thing in which she was a complete failure—namely, French.

Hour after hour she would sit poring over a grammar or a copybook, hopelessly at sea as to number, gender or conjugation, when even that chosen verb for all beginners—the verb *aimer*—was to her mind but a confused mud-

dle, in which terminations and the "three persons" of both singular and plural fought for the supremacy.

Toward the end of the first term, the French professor, M. Lemaitre, died of heart failure, and Frances Ray wept bitter tears at the loss of her helper and sympathizer. And when Frances Ray wept she was beautiful! Strange as this may seem to girls who look their worst in the hour of their woe, the fact remains that to Frances Ray grief was becoming.

Then it was that Miss Blank, almost in despair at such disarrangement of her classes, answered M. de Marceau's advertisement, and called upon him.

The interview was most satisfactory, and, M. de Marceau's extreme youth being the only objection, he, after promising the utmost discretion, was duly engaged, and a week later he entered the school.

From the first the girls adored him. They admired his eyes, his hair, and the tiny "Van Dyke" he wore; they raved over his perfect accent and courteous manners; all save Frances Ray—she alone disliked him.

M. de Marceau was, in the main, true to his promise. Never, by look or word, did he show the slightest partiality, except in the severity and marked coldness with which he treated Frances Ray. Day after day the girl came to the French class with a dozen others, and sat there, unable to recite or to read, before the unquailing eye of the professor she detested.

At length, toward the end of the year, un-

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willing to bear the disgrace of her low standing in this one study, Frances Ray implored Miss Blank, with a burst of tears, to allow her to discontinue her lessons in French. And Miss Blank, touched by her favorite's grief, drew the lovely head to her, and kissing the tear-stained face, granted her request.

From that day until the close of school Frances Ray was a changed girl. She no longer looked forward with trepidation to the dreaded hour of verbs and fables, in a tongue she could not master.

She laughed and chatted gayly with her comrades, and sang sweet songs of love and sunshine, with no gloom of unlearned idioms and exceptions overshadowing her.

In the midst of examinations and packing a great excitement occurred. Miss Blank was going abroad for the summer, and had decided to take six of her girls for a three months' tour of the Continent—and six only!

Frances Ray was one of the first who wanted to go, but when not less than twenty girls begged to be allowed to join the party, Miss Blank, in despair, appealed to M. de Marceau.

"Which of these young ladies are the six most capable of profiting by the voyage, with regard to their studies?" she asked him; and M. de Marceau made a selection.

"But Miss Ray! My dear Frances—surely she will learn her French in Europe!" Miss Blank exclaimed, for Frances Ray was not one of the chosen six.

"Pardon, mademoiselle! Mees Ray, who

cannot learn ze first of ze rules wiz me, could she zen speak wiz strangairs?" answered the Frenchman, with a shrug.

And Frances Ray, bitterly disappointed, flashed an indignant glance at her tormentor and left the room.

The night before the sailing of the steamer *La Bretagne*, on which accommodations for the party had been secured, Miss Blank passed with Mrs. Barber, Frances Ray's aunt.

In the afternoon, during a last conversation with M. de Marceau, Miss Blank had partially promised to attend that evening a debate on "The Literature of Our Times," which was to be held at Delmonico's, where M. de Marceau and several of his literary friends were expected to speak. Now, Miss Blank was decidedly interested both in the debate and in the young Frenchman himself, but how could she attend such a meeting alone?

"Mees Ray, would she not come also?" De Marceau questioned; "she would not understand, but Mees Blank could zen come."

Frances demurred at first. "I hate that man so!" she exclaimed; "I can't bear to be near him."

Then, as a little sigh of resignation escaped Miss Blank, the girl turned quickly, and flinging her arms around her teacher's neck, declared that they would go.

Accordingly that evening found them listening to various able speakers, and it occurred to Frances Ray that she understood far more of the French than she had expected to understand.

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M. de Marceau and his friend, M. Charbonnier, saw the ladies home; at least M. de Marceau walked to the car with Miss Blank, and his friend with Frances Ray.

The car was crowded, and Miss Blank found some difficulty, even with M. Charbonnier's assistance, in forcing her way inside. And not until they were several blocks nearer home did they discover that the others of their party were not in the car.

Frances Ray had been standing on the first step of the street car, waiting for a chance to follow Miss Blank, when suddenly a hand caught her arm and pulled her backward, and in another moment the car sped quickly downtown, leaving her alone with the man she dreaded and loathed, who whispered hoarsely:

"You shall not go, Mees Ray, until I haf told you—that I luf you—yes, even I"—seeing her shrink from him as he bent toward her the better to scan her face in the lamp light. "Why did I treat you so cruelly, and make you hate me, when I was, all ze time, longing to take you in my arms—to kiss away ze tears my sternness had brought to zose dear eyes? Why? Because I had promised Miss Blank on my honor that to not one of her pupils would I breathe a word of luf. But now I am free, free! To-morrow I leaf for France, for my home. Gif me but one leetle word of hope, and soon I will come back for you, *ma chérie, mon amour!* Frances, *ma petite reine*, tell me zat you luf me. Ah! *comme je t'adore!*"

Half past eleven had chimed from the great

oak timepiece in Mr. Barber's library, when, as if in answer to her uncle's vows of vengeance, and to the tears of both her teacher and her aunt, the door opened to admit Frances Ray, pale, trembling and tearful. Under a bond of secrecy she told them all that had passed, imploring her uncle to let the matter rest, as M. de Marceau would leave America the next morning, probably never to return; then she denounced him as the most detestable of men.

As she stood for a moment on the gangplank next morning, after bidding Miss Blank good-by, Frances Ray selected two red rosebuds from a bunch she wore and threw them, with a pretty gesture, at her teacher's feet. Scarcely had they touched the deck when Paul de Marceau, stepping quickly forward, raised them gently—ay, tenderly—and, with infinite grace, presented one sweet token to Miss Blank; the other he pressed to his lips, unheeding the crowd who saw him do it, and murmured in Miss Blank's all sympathizing ear: "Forgive me! I luf her, and—I must go."

Before La Bretagne had reached Havre Miss Blank knew of M. de Marceau's love for Frances Ray, and the story of his life.

"I am in France a man of arts and letters; a statesman," he told her. "I am rich, very rich; but a quarrel with my father—a political quarrel—sent me to America. Now all is well, and you will see how I am received."

And surely enough, on the evening of landing, as they dropped anchor in the beautiful

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harbor, a tender, gay with flags, illuminated with many-colored lights, and alive with people who cheered lustily to the accompaniment of the "Marseillaise," which sounded from on deck, steamed up alongside of the great ship, when a shout arose from a hundred voices of:

"De Marceau! De Marceau! *Où es tu, De Marceau?*"

Then, as the young statesman appeared, bare-headed, before them, smiling and bowing his thanks for this reception, that sublimest of all French poets, Victor Hugo, made an address of welcome. When, three months later, La Bretagne sailed from Havre, Miss Blank and her pupils sailed on her, and Paul de Marceau came to bid them good-by.

"When you see Mees Ray," he said at parting, "eef she should ask for me, tell her I send her my compliments. But do not let her know what my life here ees, or my position. Should she one day care for me, eet must be for myself alone. Tell her, my friend, zat I could make her happy, and zat I could earn my bread and hers, but nuzzing more. I haf your promise?"

"You have," answered Miss Blank earnestly. "I will say no more. And now, good-by."

Upon reaching New York, Miss Blank, having been relieved by parents and friends of the responsibility of her six summer charges, hastened to spend one night with her friend, Mrs. Barber, and to see Frances Ray

She found the girl in a deplorable condition, sad and listless—in short, in love.

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And finally, when they were alone, kneeling by Miss Blank's side, her face hidden in her hands, her eyes tearfully bright, Frances Ray confessed her love for Paul de Marceau. It was the "old, old story," that she told between her sobs; he had loved her and she had scorned his love—had sent him from her, despising him. And now, when it was too late, the proud heart turned and sought its master in vain.

"He will not come back," she whispered huskily; "I told him it would be useless to do so. But oh, Miss Blank, I want him! I want him so much!"

Miss Blank tried to comfort her. The love was mutual, she assured the weeping girl, for he had told her all. He was a gentleman, and he could support her and make her happy.

But Frances Ray refused to be comforted. It was all her own fault, she said to herself, and day by day she passed in hoping almost against hope, in mourning unceasingly for the bygone days, while even her prayers seemed unavailing.

Six weeks later Miss Blank saw among the arrivals from Europe the name of "Paul de Marceau."

Soon after, having business in New York, Miss Blank called again upon Miss Barber, but was informed by the lordly butler, after waiting for some minutes, that "Mrs. Barber begged to be excused, and Miss Ray was well. The ladies could not see Miss Blank that afternoon."

Grieved beyond measure at this extraordi-

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nary message, but seeking no explanation from the servant, Miss Blank left the house, and hastened to the hotel where M. de Marceau usually stopped.

She was ushered into a reception room, and, seated by a door leading into an adjoining room, she distinctly heard De Marceau's voice:

"Tell ze lady I am not at home," he said, and, without waiting for the man to return, Miss Blank walked out of the room and out of the hotel.

"I don't understand them at all," the good lady muttered to herself, as she hurried down the crowded street, "but my conscience is clear, at any rate; so I won't let it worry me."

One month from that time Miss Blank read in the paper an account of the marriage of "Miss Frances Ray, daughter of the late Mr. James Ray, of New York, to Mr. Paul de Marceau, of Paris, at Grace Church, New York."

And she had received no word of invitation or of announcement!

Five years passed slowly and uneventfully to Miss Blank, still with her school in Connecticut, when one morning in early May a servant brought her a visitor's card. It was heavily edged in mourning, and bore the name "Madame de Marceau."

Miss Blank started up in glad surprise, and hastened to the door of her room. Then an ugly little frown puckered her brow, and she stood still to think. A moment after a smile

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chased away the frown, and hurrying down the broad stairway, Miss Blank entered the drawing room. A pale, sad-faced woman rose to meet her. There was a long, silent embrace, then:

"It was good of you to see me, very good," Madame de Marceau murmured, as they seated themselves side by side on the soft divan near the open window.

"My poor child!" Miss Blank said gently, "how ill you look! How changed! And this mourning, dear, it is for——"

She broke off abruptly, almost frightened by the look on the younger woman's face.

"It is for auntie," she finished; "she died a week ago, and I arrived home in time to hear all, and have come to ask your forgiveness."

"Dear child, I can forgive and forget now that I have you back with me. But poor Evelyn, how sad, how sad!" murmured Miss Blank, wiping away a tear shed for the friend of her childhood.

"All I can tell you without laying blame on one who—has been very dear to me," Frances de Marceau continued, "is this—you were cruelly wronged. After your return from Europe, when I was wearing out my energy and strength longing for the man I loved, they—auntie and uncle—sent for him secretly. He came, as you know, and we were married. They told him, to make it seem to him that they had wanted him from the first, that it was your fault that they had not sent before. They told him that you had said he was not a suitable

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husband for a girl in my position. Ah! I know it all now! Auntie told me at the end, and craved your forgiveness. Paul and I never spoke of it during our married life; so I did not know of the cruel deception of which they made you the author. My husband is wealthy, and a great statesman now—but, Miss Blank, I come to you with my little ones for shelter. I have obtained a divorce from M. de Marceau for desertion and non-support, and have come home to America at auntie's request—to find her dying. Will you let us stay with you, my children and I, and I will pay for my board by teaching French? I have mastered it at last," she added with a little weary smile; "I did not find my professor so severe when we were man and wife."

"You shall stay with me as long as I live. How happy you will make me! And the dear children, when will they come?" Miss Blank exclaimed delightedly.

"I brought them with me," Madame de Marceau said, rising deliberately and walking to a door which opened into a smaller reception room. "Paul! Diane! Come and see Aunt Elizabeth. Here she is."

Together they advanced toward the delighted old lady, hand in hand; a handsome boy of nearly four, and a toddling baby girl of two summers.

"Oh, you darlings!" Miss Blank cried, catching them, first one and then the other, in her arms, and kissing them almost fiercely. "Yes, I am your old auntie, and you must never leave

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me again. Frances," turning to the mother, who stood watching the little group with tear-dimmed eyes, "we must never mention the past, dear. The present is happiness enough for me; I shall make yours in the future."

THE END.

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